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THE JANTE LAW AND RACISM: A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION ON SWEDISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

A Thesis Presented

by

KEVIN J. TURAUSKY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

February 2011

Anthropology

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A Thesis Presented

by

KEVIN J. TURAUSKY

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DEDICATION

To the Swedes, old and "new": *Du skall tro att du är verkligen något!*

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ABSTRACT

THE JANTE LAW AND RACISM: A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION ON SWEDISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

FEBRUARY 2011

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This paper focuses on how the Swedish social code known as The Jante Law plays a role in the prevalence of racism in Sweden, both on the individual and societal levels. Its core message that no one is superior to another fundamentally contradicts racism and informs government policy, but also reinforces institutionalized discrimination. I use literature review, ethnographic observations and interviews to examine the ways in which racism is understood and experienced in Sweden. This paper also investigates how concepts of sameness and community have changed over time and how the shifting of these concepts has resulted in greater inclusiveness in Swedish society. I begin with an overview of the history of Sweden's interactions with—and shifting attitudes towards—non-Swedes. I then discuss the origins and nature of the Jante Law and how it functions as a hegemonic system as well as promoting certain behaviors as a component of governmentality. Furthermore, I analyze the trend of new cultures and ideas entering Swedish society and how such changes are causing the Jante Law to decline. I investigate how a culturally engrained notion of being modest and inconspicuous alters overt and covert racist discourse in Sweden. Additionally, I include an ethnographic account of my experience in Sweden as well as those of interviewees of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I

conclude the paper with a discussion of the implications for Swedish society as immigration increases while the Jante Law loses its influence over Swedish culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades the socio-political face of Europe has changed dramatically, particularly with regard to civil rights and discrimination directed at those from outside Europe (Jelloun 1999, Winant 2001, Wikan 2002, Swank and Betz 2003, Balibar 2004). The influx of immigrants from the Global South and Eastern Europe has altered the dynamic in Western European countries. The question of how to integrate these newcomers is part of what the Swedish press has dubbed "the postcolonial problem" (Tidholm 2008:8). While each country has their own particular challenges in dealing with this shift, Nordic countries and Sweden specifically stand apart from the rest. For instance, despite criticisms within the country, Sweden has one of the most generous refugee policies of any country[1] and while discrimination toward foreigners exists, it has not reached the levels in countries such as France, which sparked a series of riots. That said, however, the rhetoric that has been espoused and the policies being implemented as a result of this demographic shift bear striking similarities to discussions and policies in the United States at various points throughout its history. This is particularly noteworthy given how different the US and Sweden are, as well as the different time periods in which the two countries experienced migrations. A comparison with historic literature regarding immigration in the United States may prove helpful in anticipating trends in immigrant acceptance in Sweden.

[1] Since the Iraq War began in 2003, Sweden has received nearly as many Iraqi asylum-seekers as the rest of Europe combined and the town of Södertälje alone has more Iraqi refugees than all of North America (Martineau 2008).

The idea of equality for all is one of the central elements in modern Swedish society and Swedes have traditionally viewed their country as a bastion of tolerance and justice. This self-appraisal and reputation are being challenged in this new globalized world where waves of immigrants are moving into the country. Despite the increase in hostility towards foreigners, Sweden's progressive stance on social issues stems from a central component of their culture: the Jante Law (pronounced YAN-teh)[2], an unwritten social code governing people's behavior. In this paper I will explore the history of this ideology and explain how the Swedish Jante Law both discourages and promotes discrimination and other xenophobic tendencies towards non-ethnic Swedes. In order to do this I will combine literature review as well as my own fieldwork observations and interpretive analysis to present a greater understanding of the racial and cultural dynamics currently in place in Sweden.

This thesis began as a fusion of four different term papers, each dedicated to a particular aspect of the immigrant situation in Sweden. While three of them were writings of a more academic nature, one ethnographic paper, which became chapter five, was written in a more narrative style. The style of that ethnography was inspired by Lila Abu-Lughod's *Drama's of Nationhood*, which sought to illuminate how national and cultural identity is formed as well as eliciting respect and understanding for the people she wrote about. It is my hope that I have done this for my friends and interviewees included in this thesis and that the more personal and contextualized approach will ground my findings in human experiences while I discuss abstract theory.

This first chapter sets up the context of my research and how and why I decided to approach these topics in the way that I did. I begin by clarifying the terms I will use throughout

[2] IPA: */'yantɛ/*

my paper to define who is and is not a Swede. The next step is to lay out the theoretical framework that guides this thesis and what sources I am relying on for these discourses. I will then detail the methodology and research design I employed during my ethnographic research in Sweden. This will be concluded by an overview of the ethical considerations and practical limitations that were present during my fieldwork.

The second chapter begins with a general history of how the Other was viewed in Sweden's history and its part in advancing scientific racism. The following sections detail the histories of the Finns, Kurds and Yugoslavs in Sweden, with comparisons made to the United States' immigration history.

The third chapter details the Jante Law, its origins, history, the apparent contradiction in its message of equality and the mistrust of outsiders it engenders. I also discuss the positive results when it is applied to the macro level and how people can be socialized into the Jante Law.

The fourth chapter concerns the aversive form of discrimination in Sweden known as *smygrasism* (pronounced smeeg-rah-SISM)[3] and how use of coded language and excessive cautiousness in speech signify covert racist discourse. I then note the effects of implementing anti-discrimination policies in the job market and how such measures result in institutionalized discrimination. I analyze how the Jante Law predicts the meticulousness in hiding one's prejudiced opinions as well as the frequency with which racist speech goes unchallenged.

Chapter five provides an ethnographic approach to the immigrant situation in Sweden based upon interviews and field notes during my time in Stockholm. I discuss the different ways in which Swedishness is constructed in the minds of people living in Sweden and how such

[3] IPA: /ˈsmʉːgraˌsɪsm̩/

notions are evolving. This chapter also elucidates the lived experiences of racism for people of various backgrounds and how organizations have formed with the goal of freeing people of internalized racism. I conclude with my analysis of the ethno-national hierarchy in place in Sweden as understood by Swedes, immigrants and my own experiences. This chapter's contextualized descriptive approach was originally conceived as term paper in an ethnographic writing course. I chose to retain the style along with the data in order to put a face to the people of Sweden.

The sixth and concluding chapter summarizes the Jante Law and its place in shaping racist discourse in Sweden as well as its role in creating a highly egalitarian welfare state that continuously accepts refugees while other nations have tightened their borders. I end with an estimation of what the decline of the Jante Law will mean for Swedish policy and everyday acceptance of immigrants.

Terminology

In Sweden, the term "immigrant" (*invandrare*) is popularly understood to mean dark-skinned people, often Muslims, who are typically uneducated. Western Europeans are implicitly (or sometimes even explicitly) not called immigrants, even when certain white immigrant groups, such as the Finns, vastly outnumber any one dark-skinned immigrant group. A particularly telling example of this is the fact that up until 2005 there were more American immigrants in Sweden than Somalis (*Statistiska centralbyrån* 2010) yet the presence of Americans does not provoke the same kind of panic that the Somalis' presence does. The fear of non-Western foreigners entering the country and eventually destroying Swedish culture seems to

be much greater than the fear of American culture and values dominating the media and eroding traditional Swedish culture—even though the latter is perhaps a more legitimate concern.

Additionally, there is a sense that immigrants and Swedes are mutually exclusive categories, that not only will those that move there only be nominally Swedish but that their children will be thought of as actual immigrants as well rather than simply 2nd generation immigrants.[4] It is for this reason that I hesitated to use the local Swedish terminology in this paper. Were I to write in such terms and say that Swedes discriminate against immigrants I would imply that Western immigrants do not suffer discrimination and that they are functionally Swedish. As I will illustrate with the Finns, Yugoslavs and my own experiences this is simply untrue; for this reason a "whites" versus "non-whites" categorization is inapplicable, as well.

In order to obtain the highest accuracy in my interviews I opted to use the terms "ethnic Swede" and "non-ethnic Swede," terms that all of my interviewees readily understood and accepted without need for explanation (although some interviewees considered culture, nationality and ethnicity to be interchangeable concepts). Given the problematic nature of the "Swede" versus "immigrant" dichotomy, some of the people I interviewed initially found it difficult to explain their opinions to me because (I suspect) they did not want to be recorded speaking of Swedes and immigrants in oppositional terms even if they did know precisely what I was asking.

[4] Despite being a misnomer, I use this term to mean someone who is born in Sweden to parents who are both immigrants themselves. These individuals are still regarded as immigrants in mainstream Swedish culture. I have no data beyond anecdotal claims that third-generation onward would also be regarded as immigrants.

An ethnic Swede is a member of the majority ethnic group indigenous to the country of Sweden and non-ethnic Swedes are, by definition, everyone else.[5] Non-ethnic Swede is a broad term that encompasses all immigrants (naturalized or not),[6] people born and raised in Sweden who are of foreign background (who may suffer the same discrimination as immigrants) and peoples native to Sweden who are recognized ethnic minorities. While ethnic Swedes would not normally refer to themselves as such, all of the people I spoke to understand the distinction—particularly in terms of people of Swedish descent born in other countries (*svenskättlingar*).[7]

For the purposes of my research, I define someone as Swedish if they are white, describe themselves as Swedish, natively speak the Swedish language, are well versed in mainstream Swedish culture and are native-born citizens of Sweden. In practice, this means that anyone who can pass for Swedish is to be defined as such. This may sometimes mean that someone who is not technically an ethnic Swede, such as someone with the surname Kruger or Sørensen—indicating German or Danish ancestry, respectively—is "grandfathered in" to the Swedish ethnicity. As a result, I will use the term "Swede" to refer to anyone who is or functionally is an ethnic Swede unless otherwise specified and "non-ethnic Swede" will refer to anyone who is not a Swede.

Theoretical Lens

Contemporary Swedish society is founded upon the belief that no one is innately superior or has a greater moral worth than anyone else (Daun 1996:215). While this dominant cultural

[5] I should note that these terms can be misunderstood to mean the exact opposite of what is intended. This is derived from the notion that whites do not have an ethnicity, as can be seen in reference to children of immigrants in London being "of ethnic origin" (Van Dijk 1993:86). Thus an "ethnic Swede" would be someone whose ethnicity is considered remarkable.
[6] Naturalized citizens are sometimes known as "new Swedes" (*nysvenskar*).
[7] The only possible context in which immigrants would not be non-ethnic Swedes is if they were Swedish-Americans (or other nationality) moving to Sweden.

norm might be a recurring theme in the constitutions and legal codes in many countries, it is not necessarily followed on the everyday societal level. Sweden, on the other hand, has made great strides in combating classist and sexist thinking in no small part to this ideology. Recently, however, the introduction of immigrant populations from all over the world has exposed a latent xenophobia in the country. A contradiction seems to form where something as deeply rooted as racism[8] coexists with an equally deeply rooted belief that no one is better than anyone else. The racism that is present in Sweden is generally more discreet than in other countries, a fact reflected in the Swedish term *smygrasism*, or "sneaky racism."[9] This aversive racism has powerful but often subtle effects in society and is much harder to identify, particularly for Swedes. In order to properly investigate the interaction between Swedes and non-ethnic Swedes, I will employ a framework combining *habitus*, ideology, governmentality and critical race theory.

In brief, the Jante Law is a set of social provisions in Swedish society[10] that instruct people to not aggrandize themselves and to distrust those who do. While it is often seen pertaining to materialist acquisition, such as conspicuous consumption, it applies to intellectual ability, physical appearance and general ambition. It is customary to not just downplay one's strengths in public but also to genuinely believe that one is not particularly special despite whatever traits one might have. These unwritten social codes inform much of their contemporary society, from everyday behavior to official policy. Because much of Sweden's emphasis on equality is rooted in the Jante Law's cultural mores, Bourdieu's *habitus* perfectly applies to this

[8] Racism in this case is defined as "prejudice and discrimination, where prejudice means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race, and discrimination means differential actions toward others according to their race" (Jones 2000:1212).
[9] Other possible translations for *smyg-* are "hidden," "secretive" or "closeted."
[10] The Jante Law is not exclusively a Swedish phenomenon and can be seen in Danish, Norwegian, and to a certain extent, Finnish societies.

adherence to unspoken rules. *Habitus* is an "immanent law, *lex insita*, laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but the practices of co-ordination, since the corrections and adjustments of the agents themselves carry out presuppose their mastery of a common code . . ." (Bourdieu 1977:81). That is to say *habitus* is the set of behaviors one follows not because one *must* but because it would not normally seriously occur to the person to act otherwise. *Habitus* forms the foundation of one's personality, as it is the aggregate of one's habits, beliefs and what one takes for granted. The Jante Law functions internally as well as externally; it is propagated not only through the policing of one's own behavior but policing the behavior of others.

Because there is no actual law being broken, the only punishment for transgressing the Jante Law must be meted out in the form of disfavor and the loss of social capital. Aksel Sandemose wrote in his 1936 novel, *A Fugitive Crosses his Tracks*, of the effects of an entire town growing cold and hostile to those who would not obey the Jante Law to the point where living in the town became untenable. While the effect of being raised in a society where one is taught not to consider oneself better than anyone else is normally enough to keep people in line, sometimes additional coercion is necessary. This is what Althusser identifies as an Ideological State Apparatus. Such apparatuses, he notes,

> function massively and predominantly *by ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. (There is no such thing as a purely ideological apparatus.) Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. (1971)

These behavioral codes are still learned in schools and churches in Sweden, though the largely secular Swedes are less likely to be directly influenced by the latter. Later in this thesis I will illustrate how the Jante Law's incidental presence in the school system allows it to be perpetuated as an ideology in society. Though much less direct nowadays than in Sandemose's novel, the Jante Law maintains its control over people by making them fear the envy of their peers and neighbors. The provoked envy of the community serves as the repressive component to the Jante Law. Additionally, while Sandemose's novel takes place in a small town rather than on the state level, the Jante Law can be found throughout Sweden and Scandinavia. The implication seems to be that the fictional town of Jante itself is not the only place the Law exists, but that its particular manifestation of it is more cruel and repressive than in other towns. Those who transgressed the Jante Law in Jante would likely be able to learn from their mistakes and get along well in another town, but if a person rejected such conformity entirely then they would have very few options available to them. They may feel the need to flee the country entirely, as did the novel's titular fugitive, Espen Arnakke, or would accept having few friends and alienating coworkers.

Being mindful of where one's own ideas come from and how they influence one's perceptions of the world is crucial. Because very few Swedes think critically about the Jante Law, they are unaware of the reasons why they think the way they do. As Gramsci noted, "The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Such an inventory must therefore be made at the outset" (Gramsci 2000:326). If the Jante Law does influence racism, either positively or negatively, then it behooves a society that believes itself to be tolerant and progressive to examine such a cultural

norm closely. The awareness of the various loci of power[11] can be surprisingly difficult given how so many things in society that govern people's actions are taken for granted. Understanding how the Jante Law functions requires an understanding of where it came from, as well as how and why it came into being. It is for this reason I am creating a historical inventory of the components of the Jante Law that contributed to the social model present today.

Christian teachings were key contributors to the Jante Law, both in name and in effect. Sandemose deliberately gave the Jante Law ten commandments to call to the reader's mind the Ten Commandments in Mosaic Law and explained the purpose behind both sets of laws: "In the ancient laws of the land and in the Law of Moses [*Moseloven* in Norwegian] you will forever detect the spirit of the Law of Jante [*Janteloven*]; from the Law of Moses, in particular, flow numberless decrees designed to hold the pack in check" (Sandemose 1936:79).[12] Though Mosaic Law was clearly a contributor, it was only after the Protestant Reformation that the beginnings of the Jante Law started to form in Scandinavia.

The dominant religion in Sweden has historically been Lutheranism, and while openly religious people are much less common in the country than in previous times, it is still the largest denomination. Weber's analysis of the ideological effects of Protestantism, particularly with regard to self-government, can greatly aid any discussion of Swedish culture. Weber noted that the acquisition of wealth was not sinful in itself in pious Lutheranism, only the use of it for indulgent purposes (2003:163), and that the surplus wealth allowed capitalism to flourish once this proscription vanished. I posit that in Sweden, piety decreased but the conspicuous display of

[11] Power is a generative system in that it creates things that are conducive to its continued existence. In the context of Foucault's governmentality, power is effectively fostering conformity via manipulated knowledge, which then serves to uphold the status quo.
[12] In the original Norwegian the similarity between *Moseloven* and *Janteloven* make Sandemose's allusion even more obvious.

wealth still remained taboo. To purchase something beyond the means of your neighbors results in the community believing that you consider yourself of higher standing than they are. People were only "allowed" to purchase what was within the means of everyone in the community. This aversion to materialism became *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977:164) and was codified into the Jante Law.

Given its religious origins, it is not surprising that the Jante Law retains some of the social functions of the church. Foucault discussed a form of power that came about through Christianity's organization as a church, which he called "pastoral power." It was distinct from the power of the sovereign in that it was focused on the individual's personal betterment and salvation. Foucault claims pastoral power continued on even after the decline of the church's influence and today coexists with the power of the modern state. Pastoral power "does not look after just the whole community but each individual in particular, during his entire life." More importantly, however, "this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (Foucault 1982:783). Someone raised with the Jante Law cannot knowingly break it without feeling some measure of guilt or, for lack of a secular word, sinfulness. Greed, selfishness and entitlement are shied away from due to the pastoral power's influence on an individual's conscience. The Jante Law influences popular conceptions of what it means to be a good person and in doing so reflects the original functions of pastoral power.

Foucault notes that the modern state does not operate completely apart from the level of the individual, but requires a pre-approved set of behaviors for the individual to follow in order for individuality to be tolerated. The modern state is, "a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a

new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault 1982:783). The Jante Law essentially is this set of patterns, which people in Nordic countries are expected to follow. It is here that we can see how pastoral power in its contemporary form contributes to governmentality in Sweden. It is easier for a populace to be governed when they regulate their own behavior and each other's rather than requiring direct coercion from an institution. This is essentially what governmentality is: a governing of mentality, self-government.

The Jante Law functions as a Gramscian hegemonic system that provides "'cultural, moral and ideological' leadership" (Gramsci 2000:423) though without any centralized leader or guiding organizers. While this appears to be a contradictory claim, as hegemony requires moral leadership, what I mean by this is there is no central office or authority that monitors Jante Law infractions. Leaders in other areas of society, such as business managers, priests and school teachers, can and do exert control and lead in accordance with the Jante Law, but never in its name. Values of humility and constancy are promoted and enforced by such leaders if they themselves adhere to the Jante Law, not because it is mandated by some institution but because it is congruent to their personal values.

People are expected to govern themselves with moral and economic responsibility (Burchell *et al* 1991:91), something the Jante Law implicitly promotes in its own particular way. However, the parameters of mainstream society people are dictated to follow have changed over time; one of the trends that Swedish social scientists (e.g., Daun 1996) have observed is the decline in the Jante Law's influence in recent decades. This is largely attributed to globalization, Americanization and the large number of immigrants moving into the country. With a younger generation consuming media that is antithetical to the Jante Law and people coming from cultures where such a concept is foreign to them, it is losing its hold over society. Because

hegemonic systems require the continuous renewal of consent of the people to perpetuate themselves, and the Jante Law functions without formal or official leadership, it is gradually fading from the collective memory. It should be repeated, however, that the Jante Law is still alive and well in the early 21st century and though it is not as influential as it once was, it would be a mistake to believe that it is no longer a significant social force.

The Swedish ethnographer Åke Daun has written extensively on the historical background of the Swedish mindset in the late 20th century. Similar to Weber's argument of a link between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism, Daun posits links between the Church, rural agrarian life and social formations in contemporary Swedish society. Daun suggests that remnants of ancient beliefs still influence Swedish culture today. He asserts that Swedes view their country as modern and civilized, while countries in the Global South are like Sweden was in the past (Daun 1996:155). This kind of prejudice is indicative of the "new" racism based around cultural rather than biological supremacy that is found in Western societies.

Though prejudice is a nigh universal aspect of human society (Daun 1996:156), covert racism is a part of Western societies that is motivated by the publicly embraced idea that all peoples are equal. Elites and the middle-class generally do not directly admit to their prejudices because racism is now considered a moral flaw (Van Dijk 1993:82). But rather than actually accept the fact that they have racist opinions and work to change them to remove the moral flaw from their character, many just attempt to exempt themselves from the definition. Teun Van Dijk's *Elite Discourse and Racism* is particularly applicable to Sweden's context, as it analyzes many of the strategies employed in covert racist discourse. Narrowly defining or redefining racism in such a fashion as to disqualify one's own opinions or actions as racist is one such strategy.

> The denial of racism by a racist party, as well as by white people in general, implies not only the denial of having committed a social crime or immoral act but also a different definition of racism in the first place. In everyday situations such denials usually pertain to intentions ('I did not mean it in that way') or to a different concept of racism ('I don't call that racist'). (Van Dijk 1993:82)

This calls to mind what Robinson calls "myths of egalitarianism" (Robinson 2000:26). Racism is bound only to a certain form and thus prejudiced behaviors can be denied by pointing out that such actions are not consistent with the provided definition of racism. In more official circles, racist discourse is hidden in "politically correct" language that allows the message and intent to remain the same.

Lisa Lowe's work concerning the reception of Asian-Americans in the United States, as visible "foreigners," has significant parallels to non-ethnic Swedes in Sweden. Both groups report feeling like a foreigner in their own country, regardless of how long they have been in the country or how well they have adapted to the local culture. The frequent comments on how good a non-ethnic Swede's Swedish is—regardless of how long they have lived in Sweden—illustrates some clear parallels to Asian-Americans. Similar to Asian-Americans, a great many (in fact the majority of) non-ethnic Swedes in Sweden were born abroad, but may have been in the country for fifty years in some cases. Because whites are more able to blend into Swedish society and not be terribly conspicuous, they do not experience the "perpetual foreigner" effect in the same fashion that people from non-European backgrounds do. Lowe notes (1996:162) that while citizenship implies equal rights for everyone, it is only true on paper and the reality is racialized stratifications in society grant certain people more practical rights than others. Lowe identifies this as a "racial contradiction" (Lowe 1996:164) where espoused state doctrine differs from the

lived experiences of citizens. Employment and housing discrimination are particularly notable examples in Sweden.

Jane Hill's *Everyday Language of White Racism* explores this covert racism present in commonplace interactions that demonstrate unspoken prejudices. Hill's recognition of systems and practices that may reproduce racism without being inherently racially motivated is pivotal in understanding the operation of social formations and can be applied to Swedish society. The reticent nature of Swedes as documented by Daun (1996) can often overlap with the "chilly climate" discrimination (Hill 2008:176) many immigrants and non-ethnic Swedes experience. What is considered normal behavior on the part of Swedes may be interpreted by those unfamiliar with the culture as Swedes only associating with people like themselves and avoiding contact with those from elsewhere in the world. Hill notes that racism can infuse itself into nearly any social system or discourse (Hill 2008:19) and as a result there is likely a confluence of covert racism and these social codes that lend themselves so easily to prejudiced behavior. An example from the United States would be whites choosing to live in affluent, all-white neighborhoods for reasons such as investment in a house as real estate or to have access to high quality amenities like parks and schools. Despite non-racial motivations, the effect of residential segregation is the same as if the whites had acted out of racial prejudice. (Hill 2008:26) Furthermore, prejudiced individuals could easily disguise their motivations by convincing themselves and others that their decisions were based on the aforementioned non-racist motivations. In the context of the Jante Law, Swedes who do not like living with immigrants may claim they are too haughty and egotistical when there is a genuine clash of personalities, but bigots can also use this excuse to disguise their true motivations. In either case, the effect remains the same: residential segregation.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's research on colorblind racism is particularly applicable to the changes in the social understanding of racism in the post-WWII and post-US civil rights era. While the abolition of Jim Crow laws in the US had no direct influence over Swedish society, the shift in what was considered acceptable speech concerning non-ethnic Swedes changed around the same time (Sawyer 2002:30). Although the context of Affirmative Action questions that frames Bonilla-Silva's piece is absent in Sweden, the examples of "incoherence" (2002:43) he noticed being exhibited by white Americans when discussing race questions is strikingly similar to the behavior of some of my Swedish interviewees.

Effectively, I am combining practice theory, Foucault's governmentality, and Marxist takes on critical race theory and ideology. Employing all of these theories to address the various facets of Swedish society influenced by the Jante Law and the arrival of immigrants to the country will hopefully yield insights into the current social climate in Sweden. I will now overview my methodology and how I obtained the data that informs my theoretical framework.

Methods and Research Design

The fact that to my knowledge no one has seriously investigated how the presence of the Jante Law informs people's beliefs on racism is puzzling, as the question seems obvious to me. My puzzlement only increased when I read *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* and the main character, Espen Arnakke, is held in jail in the same cell as a black man and recounts to the reader, "The Negro was slavering and rolling his eyes: 'I never saw the like of how you do act! Just because I'm black, you needn't go putting on airs and thinking you are better than me!' This was too much like Jante and more than I could stand" (Sandemose 1936:224). Arnakke is a native of Jante and had been driven mad by the oppressive dogma of the town to the point where

he murdered a man during his travels. The mere hint of plea for humility from the black man so enrages Arnakke that he then attempts to head-butt his cellmate. In the very book from which the phrase "the Jante Law" originates, the author implies following the Jante Law and regarding people of color as inferior are contradictory concepts.[13] Sandemose hinted at the dichotomy between racism and Jante Law equality back in 1936 and this connection has since been forgotten.

At the beginning of 2009, I traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, to conduct ethnographic fieldwork for five months, interviewing native Swedes and immigrants on their views about the Jante Law, racism, integration and multiculturalism. I was curious to see if people thought there was either a connection between the Jante Law and racism or if the two were contradictory. I also asked the non-ethnic Swedes I interviewed to tell me how racism manifests itself in Sweden and relate to me their experiences of discrimination, if they had any. Because the previous literature on Sweden's immigrant situation has focused almost exclusively on the immigrant perspective, I chose to devote the majority of my study to interviewing Swedes. Most of the interviewees, both Swedes and non-ethnic Swedes, were educated, white-collar workers or students and quite a few worked in fields that required high interactivity with immigrants. In primarily interviewing Swedes, I hoped to glean a more well-rounded perspective on the difficulties facing immigrant integration than could be learned from focusing exclusively on immigrants. I selected Stockholm as my field site for the simple fact that in terms of absolute numbers, the capital city has the most immigrants. I resided in an apartment in Sätra, a suburban district of Stockholm with a high concentration of immigrants, although not as highly segregated

[13] Of course, Sandemose's incredibly negative portrayal of the Jante Law throughout the book must not be forgotten either. This scene should be understood to reflect how oppressive and stifling the people of Jante were in their pursuit of equality rather than to suggest that a black man wanting to be treated equal is as contemptuous an idea as the Jante Law.

as other neighborhoods in the city. However, because I typically rendezvoused with my informants elsewhere in the city, only one of my interviews was actually conducted in Sätra. Sätra is approximately 30 minutes away from downtown Stockholm by subway but only one stop away from a major shopping hub in Skärholmen. The largest IKEA in the world is located in Skärholmen as well as a newly renovated shopping mall called (in English) "SKHLM: The Capital of Shopping." The name is a play on the abbreviation for Stockholm, STHLM, and the unofficial motto of the city (also in English) "The Capital of Scandinavia." Skärholmen is meant as a shopping destination for visiting foreigners, which means that while its population is approximately 74 percent immigrants (Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB 2009), it is by no means a ghetto.

I interviewed a total of 39 individuals, comprised of 16 Swedes, five Finns, six Bosnians and Serbs, six people from Kurdistan and six people from Iran, Greece, Chile and Poland. The age range of my interviewees was from 19 to early sixties, with a fairly even distribution of age ranges over 10-year intervals except for a higher number of people in their twenties and relatively few people in their forties. Most of my informants held either white-collar jobs or were students, and even those in blue-collar jobs had some form of higher education. For instance, a Greek labor migrant held a degree in mechanical engineering but due to insufficient language skills took a job as an automotive mechanic. All of my informants spoke at least two languages, with the first and second-generation immigrant groups speaking three or more.

Initially, my research design only called for interviewing Swedes, Yugoslavs and Iraqis and had excluded Finns as I originally believed their status as immigrants was historically the same as those from other Nordic states. When I learned that the history of Finnish immigrants had significant parallels to other, less "desirable," immigrant populations I broadened my study

to include Finns as well. My plan to interview Iraqis was not successful as no Arab Iraqis were willing to be interviewed, only those from Kurdistan. As a result, I shifted my focus to Kurdish immigrants from any country.

When viewed as a whole, there was no gender bias among my informants, with 20 men and 19 women represented. When divided by group, however, gender biases did emerge. Among Kurds and Bosnian/Serbs the majority of my informants were men whereas I had only one male Finnish informant. This gender disparity among Finns, I later learned, is because immigrant Finnish men are over-represented in blue-collar professions but are relatively unlikely to be employed in white-collar jobs (Soininen and Graham 1995:5). Consequently, any Finns found in these professions are more likely to be women. The Swedish interviews contained no gender bias whatsoever.

All of the Swedes I interviewed were born in Sweden but very few had been born in Stockholm, they hailed from all over Sweden but primarily from small towns rather than bigger cities. The non-ethnic Swedes were primarily first-generation immigrants born in their respective home countries. I met a few second-generation immigrants who had been born in Stockholm, all of whom were originally from suburbs, like Tensta and Rinkeby, with notoriously large numbers of immigrants.

In my first weeks of fieldwork I had great difficulty in recruiting informants for my research. I quickly learned that the taciturn nature of most Swedes, particularly with sensitive topics such as race relations, made it hard to find people willing to consent to a recorded interview. Once an initial informant was acquired, though, others accumulated via the snowball method where the person would often recommend friends, colleagues or acquaintances that

might be willing to assist me. The only exception to this pattern was with my Kurdish informants who, aside from one, were recruited via an email sent by the Kurdistan Regional Government Nordic Representation to the people on their listserv. Volunteers then called and emailed me asking to be part of my research in a sharp contrast to the reluctance of the Swedes.[14]

I used a semi-structured approach with my interviewees (as defined by Bernard and Ryan 2010), using a set of interview questions to move the conversation forward and to touch upon relevant topics, but pursued other avenues of questioning as they presented themselves in the interview. I had two sets of interview questions, one for Swedes and the other for immigrants[15]. Most of my questions were the same for both groups but the Swedish version was slightly longer and including more detailed questions about the Jante Law, while the immigrant set had more questions concerning discrimination. I made minor revisions to my interview sheets after about two months when it became clear that certain lines of questioning, such as informants' opinions of the FRA Law—Sweden's electronic surveillance of all telecommunications entering and exiting the country—were not new or surprising data. I also included the addition of follow-up questions for the purpose of countering the Swedish habit of not volunteering information. The major themes my interview questions touched upon were employment and the job market, the nature and definitions of racism and discrimination, and what it means to be Swedish. My opening sets of questions were of a closed-ended nature, i.e. asking their age, place of birth or current job. This was to ease people into the interview, to make them less self-conscious about being recorded before moving into more open-ended and sensitive questions such as, "Do

[14] I suspect the reason for this is that the Kurds would have experienced racism in Sweden and have a desire to discuss their experiences and be heard, whereas the Swedes have not experienced it and would have less personal need to voice their feelings. Additionally, many Kurds in Sweden are political refugees and as such are likely to be more outspoken about social problems than the average citizen of any ethnic background.

[15] These questions were designed primarily for people who had been born outside of Sweden, although I did employ the same set of questions for the few second-generation immigrants I interviewed.

immigrants or people of immigrant background have an easy time here? Why or why not?" I also found that Swedish and Finnish interviewees generally required more probing than Kurds, Yugoslavs or other groups. Consequently, interviews with Swedes took less time, on average, to answer all of my questions while the other groups' interviews took longer as their responses were more detailed.

Ethical Considerations

Because my work deals with human beings, I, as the researcher, must do everything in my power to minimize the risks inherent in ethnographic research. In this section I will demonstrate the precautions I took to minimize risk to my informants.

I had completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative's human subjects research training module prior to entering the field and my research design was approved by the Human Subjects Review Officer of the Department of Anthropology at University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The majority of the data I collected was via participant observation and as such, informed consent with all subjects was always obtained. Each of my informants was given a form outlining the nature of the project, their rights as participants, assurances of confidentiality and the contact information of the European Field Studies Program Field Supervisor if they had any further questions. I provided this form in Swedish and English[16] and gave each person two copies to sign and date, one for their records and one for mine. This ensured that all parties concerned had expressed written consent to a recorded interview for the purposes of ethnographic research.

[16] The Swedish version of my form was edited and proofread by a bilingual Swedish-American friend to ensure the highest degree of translation accuracy.

I never misrepresented my identity, my motives as an anthropologist, the nature of my project or my research agenda to the participants. I always let my participants know that I was recording or noting everything I heard and observed in the field for potential data which may be used in a thesis or publication. The form also explained that should they not wish to be a part of my research, they may tell me and I will not record in any form my interactions with them. Names, ages, locations, employment and other potentially identifying information will be altered in subsequent publications.

All interviews were digitally recorded, with the average interview lasting about one hour with variations in both directions. One interview lasted about a half hour while several were nearly two hours in length. The vast majority of the interviews were conducted one on one, though two interviews were done with two informants at the same time.[17] Around one third of the interviews were conducted in English while the remaining interviews were done in Swedish.[18] Code switching occurred in many of the interviews, and I often began interviews in Swedish and ended them in English. Most of my informants lived in Stockholm, though some lived in outlying, high immigrant suburbs such as Märsta and Tumba. Most of these were Kurds, although one Swede hailed from such a suburb. I transcribed the relevant data from the interviews and in the case of the interviews done in Swedish all translations are my own. All recordings, transcriptions and field notes are in my possession.

All of my informants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. Because some of my informants have a higher risk of recognition than others, I have made every effort to

[17] In both group interviews the interviewees were coworkers and spoke to me at their place of work.
[18] Interviews were often done in Swedish if the people's English skills were insufficient to fully express themselves or if Swedish was the only language both parties spoke. In one case, near the end of my fieldwork, I interviewed a Finnish woman in Swedish even though I later learned her English was good enough that she could have expressed herself adequately.

remove particularly identifying data. In certain instances I have assigned multiple pseudonyms to individuals to further minimize the risk of being identified.

Problems and Limitations

My original research design called for interviewing people from Iraq, as they are currently the third largest immigrant population, behind Finns and those from the former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, I was never able to gain access to their organizations and the only people from Iraq that I was able to speak to were from Kurdistan. Despite thorough searches, the only Iraqi organization I was able to get in contact with never returned my phone calls or emails. I later learned from the Kurds that one of the more recent waves of Iraqi refugees were members of the Ba'ath Party, loyal to Saddam Hussein, and that not only would they be hostile to Americans, they would likely be unwilling to consent to being recorded, lest their party affiliation be revealed to others. As a result of this, and because I had already gained rapport with the Kurds, I modified my research goal to focus on the Kurdish population from Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Human beings hold each other in check by means of terror. We fight to increase dread in others and to mask our own."–Aksel Sandemose[19]

The history of immigration in Sweden is typically thought to have started in the 1950s. The labor shortage that affected all of Europe after WWII (Winant 2001:253) impacted Sweden as well, despite its neutrality during the war. Workers from Finland, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and other South and Central European countries were brought in to fill vacant jobs (Westin 2006). When the oil crisis of the 1970s occurred, it triggered a reaction throughout Europe to restrict immigration and the Swedish government ended non-Nordic labor migration programs in 1972. It is worth noting, however, that the immigration restrictions in the rest of Europe would serve to exclude non-Europeans, whereas Sweden at that time did not have many non-European migrants entering the country. Their restrictions ended up excluding other Europeans while their refugee policy meant the only non-Nordic people who could easily enter the country would be non-Westerners fleeing their home countries.

Technically, not many of the asylum seekers entering Sweden were counted as refugees, but were granted asylum on "humanitarian grounds." This was a political move:

> By not recognizing these asylum seekers as UN Convention refugees, they did not enjoy the full rights to protection as written in the convention. Instead, Swedish authorities interpreted 'humanitarian grounds' without having to follow international conventions.

[19] Sandemose 1936:135.

> Consequently, the authorities could change their interpretations if necessary. (Westin 2006)

Fortunately, Sweden still approved nearly all of the asylum applications they received and during the Yugoslav Wars. There were so many asylum seekers that many were given temporary residence permits without having their cases viewed. Several of my informants told me that up until the mid 1990s, the entire process for being granted asylum was only a few weeks. After that point, the system slowed down tremendously, to the point where it may take years for the State to reach a decision, all the while the refugees are allowed to remain in Sweden, albeit in a state of limbo, until their case is reviewed.[20] What is seen as the worst part of this arrangement is that oftentimes those who have waited for years for asylum are then denied and forced to return to their country. Anders succinctly described what he felt was the cruelest consequence of this bureaucracy.

> Anders: They put people in a house two, three years and then say, "You can't stay here." The children are seven, eight, nine years old and they have to leave after three years. That's, I don't think it's human[e].[21]

Had such a family been given refugee status right away, after four years they could have applied for Swedish citizenship (Migrationsverket 2009). If living in Sweden for four years is considered sufficient time to officially become a member of society, then it is indeed unjust to insist a

[20] This is only after the asylum seekers have had their identities confirmed. If they arrive without sufficient or probable proof of their identification they will be held in a detention center for up to two weeks. Additionally, once a refugee is denied asylum they may be detained for up to two months if the authorities have reason to believe the refugee will attempt to go into hiding. (Detention in Europe 2010)

[21] Interview File 090422_02, recorded April 22, 2009. File 090528_02

person who has lived and worked in Sweden for three years return to his ravaged homeland because he did not receive a proper permit when he arrived.

For the purposes of my research I felt that the best way to get a good sampling of the immigrant situation in Sweden was to investigate the three largest immigrant groups. The Yugoslavs and Iraqis were my original groups, but as I mentioned previously the Iraqi organizations I spoke to did not want to cooperate with me and the Iraqi individuals I spoke to were equally uninterested. I initially did not include Finns in my research design, despite the fact that they are the largest immigrant group, because I originally believed comparisons to other immigrant populations would create a straw man argument. Once I was made aware of the history of Finns in Sweden, I included them in my study.

Swedes and the Other

Sweden has had a long history of scientific racism informing its view of the rest of the world. Carl Linnaeus, the creator of binomial nomenclature, believed in the innate differences between populations of humans and named them as though they were different species, *Homo africanus* and *Homo europeanus*, for example. These classifications shifted and became more nuanced over time, generally as a result of changing political and popular opinions about other countries and cultures. Sweden began to see neighboring peoples, fellow Europeans, as members of separate and inferior races. The Saami of northern Scandinavia were seen as members of an Arctic race that was "deformed and degraded" (Hudson 1996:254) and likened to "Negroes" for their backwards customs. Like many other peoples at the time, the very name given to the Saami, Lapps, was an epithet. "*Lapp*" in Swedish means "patch," a reference to Saami clothing, but also suggests something that can be discarded.

The Finns, like the Saami, were also viewed as an inferior race and suffered at the hands of Swedish colonialism. The Saami and Finns were both seen as close to nature, magical but ultimately barbaric (Catomeris 2004). The linking of these two groups would not have been difficult because while they both reside in Europe, they both speak non-Indo-European languages and are thus separate from the rest of the "civilized" continent.[22]

Once again, the very word for the Finnish people in Swedish can be seen as derogatory. The Swedish word *finne* means both a Finnish person and pimple, but unlike Lapp, which is generally understood to be derogatory and the word *same* is used instead, Swedes have no other word for Finns. As a result, Finnish people speaking Swedish must implicitly refer to themselves as pimples. The further back in time one goes, the more one can see evidence of derogatory associations with Finns, such as its now-obsolete meaning of *finne* as a homeless person (Tyda.se 2009).

Finns

The Finns are the largest immigrant group in Sweden with an immigrant population, as of 2009, of approximately 172,200 (*Statistiska centralbyrån* 2010). They comprise about 13.7 percent of the total immigrant population, not including the unknown number of Swedes who are of Finnish descent. The Finns have the longest history of any immigrant group in Sweden, dating back nearly seven hundred years (Catomeris 2004:72) when Finland had been part of the Kalmar Union, whose member states were Sweden (whose territory included Finland), Norway and Denmark. Because of this long history, the changes in popular sentiments over the centuries and the fact that Finns were, and still are, the largest group of Others Swedes would normally

[22] Finnish is actually the closest language to Saami, with many cognates, including *Suomi*, the Finnish word for Finland and the Finnish language.

encounter, they were ascribed numerous racial characteristics. As a result, we can see telling parallels between the reception of Finns in Sweden and the reception of Irish, Native Americans and Mexicans in the United States. The classic stereotype of Finns in Sweden is drunk and violent, with each one carrying a knife in his boot. While other traits ascribed to Finns over the years have come and gone, alcohol and knives appear to be constant associations. As far back as the 1600s, there are stories of Finnish witches tapping liquor from trees, like one might for maple syrup, by sticking a knife into the wood (Catomeris 2004:82).

Finns were seen as wild, violent and less intelligent a race than the Swedes. This type of mentality has been prevalent in virtually every society where marginalized peoples coexist with dominant groups; one need only look at the United States to find a plethora of examples. While white Americans' treatment of non-Europeans—particularly blacks and Native Americans—is well known, the history of the treatment of European migrants provides more nuanced similarities to Sweden's immigration history. Finns could often be likened to Native Americans, "Like the American Indians, Forest Finns are described as a kind of noble savage, strong and brave but also cruel and possessing an absolute sense of the forces of nature that they, like the Indians, seem to master to perfection" (Catomeris 2004:87, translated from Swedish). In Sweden, Finns were paradoxically respected and exoticized as a people somehow closer to nature yet persecuted and scorned for their lack of "civilization." This treatment is almost identical to the view of Native Americans in 19th century America as admirably independent yet shamefully incapable of domesticating the land (Roediger 1991).

Despite being "noble savages," the Finns, unlike Native Americans, were recruited as a source of labor in Sweden. The Finnish reputation as hard workers seemed to have outshone the stereotype for "wild" behavior (Catomeris 2004:80). In the 1600s, many Finns were hired to

chop down vast tracts of forestland in Sweden for slash and burn agriculture. The situation changed almost overnight for these migrant workers when a regulation in the 1630s, claiming that the Finns were chopping down all of Sweden's beautiful forests, made slash and burn agriculture illegal. [23] Not only were the livelihoods of the Finnish migrants criminalized but, in an effort to make them return to Finland, the regulation also stated, "hosting Finnish vagrants and giving them alms should be punished" (Catomeris 2004:78, translated from Swedish).

The treatment of Finns in the 1600s exhibits similarities to the relationship the United States later had with cheap, imported laborers. The Finnish presence in Sweden, despite the fact they were encouraged to come, was seen as a threat to the nation. This sentiment was very similar to the perceived threat posed by Mexican and other Hispanic workers in the US (Sandoval and Tambini 2004). The schizophrenic nature of policies concerning undocumented, "illegal" immigration to the US, as demonstrated by the hard-line reactions with Immigration and Naturalization Services to fears of illegal immigration, such as Operation Wetback in 1954, while legal loopholes accommodate the flow of migrant workers demanded by America's economy. Finnish immigrants seeking employment were retroactively made illegal, in contrast to the Mexican laborers who were considered illegals if they did not have a green card.

Another similarity between the treatment of Finns and Hispanics concerns their language as a threat to the nation they immigrated to. In the US, the uncouth cry, "This is America! Speak English!" can be leveled against any foreign language but due to the high number of Spanish speakers in the country, Spanish is seen as the largest threat to the American linguistic status quo. The Swedes saw Finnish as a security risk near the end of the 19th century on the grounds

[23] This regulation was actually backed by Swedish mining ventures decided that the forests would better be utilized for charcoal production (Catomeris 2004:78).

that speaking Finnish meant the people would not be loyal to Sweden in time of war and may compromise Swedish defenses. Finnish nationalism and linguistic pride in the face of Swedish discrimination was thought to be a Russian plot[24] to make Sweden easier to invade (Catomeris 2004:93). This conflation with Finns and Russians posing a threat to Sweden's eastern border sounds remarkably similar to the claim that the US-Mexican border is a possible route for Islamic terrorists to enter the United States undetected (Bayers 2005).

The Finnish language was not just seen as a symptom of dangerous Finnish nationalism, but was viewed as a threat in itself. Finnish was likened to an infectious disease by one Swedish governor, calling it "contagious" and explaining this is due to its, "'nature and structure, its rhythmic, almost melodic tone [that] makes it so easy glide over the lips'" (Catomeris 2004:92, translated from Swedish).[25] From my own observations, it seems as though Swedes sometimes have difficulty parsing apart the cultural, national and ethnic meanings behind the identifier, "Swedish." That is to say, if one is not Swedish by blood, in spirit and on paper then they may not be considered "real" Swedes. This would explain the threat seen by speakers of foreign languages who refuse to give up their native tongue; to some Swedes, holding onto one's own language means one never fully embraces Swedishness. Catomeris provides an excerpt from a letter to the editor in the 1980s highlighting the continuing agitation over the Finnish language being spoken in Sweden:

> Why have you moved to Sweden if you do not want to learn Swedish? Sweden is monolingual, and it's Swedish that we speak. You who live in the Torne Valley. We're starting to think the border was drawn on the wrong side of you, because you speak more

[24] Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire at the time.
[25] This statement is particularly strange in to contemporary sensibilities since the cadence of Swedish leads many to compare it to singing, while Finnish is far more monotonous to Swedish and American ears.

> in Finnish than Swedish. [. . .] We Swedes have nothing against foreigners, because we have no prejudices. Speak your native language [. . .] at home, but not here. (2004:106, translated from Swedish)

The Tornedalians (the name for those who live in the Torne Valley) actually speak a distinct dialect of Finnish that was recognized as minority language in Sweden in 1999, along with standard Finnish, Saami, Yiddish and Romany Chib. The qualifications for achieving language minority status are unspecified, but the language must have been spoken in Sweden for "a very long time" (Regeringskansliet 2007). Tornedalians, as Finnish descendants, have been in Sweden for as long as Finns have been, and their claim to the region would then be seven hundred years old. Nevertheless, the author of the letter to the editor (and presumably many more) regards the Tornedalians as "foreigners" because they do not speak Swedish despite the fact that the Torne Valley is where their native language is spoken. This would be analogous to accusing Cajuns of being foreigners in the United States because they are native Cajun French speakers. A similar analogy might be made with calling people of Mexican descent who still speak Spanish foreigners even though their ancestors became US citizens once Mexico ceded part of its territory and its inhabitants to the United States after the Mexican-American War.

The idea that Sweden is or ever was monolingual is purely mythical. The indigenous Saami populations, as well as different regional dialects of Swedish, have always been present in Sweden. In fact, Swedish was not the official language in Sweden until 2009, the same time that the other recognized minority languages in Sweden became official languages (Landes 2009).

The author of the letter also attempts to assure the reader that he is not prejudiced because, according to him, Swedes have no prejudices and nothing against foreigners. The fact that he

considers Swedish citizens living within Swedish territory to be foreigners who should go back to their side of the border simply because they do not speak Swedish at home utterly contradicts this. "Real Swedes" must speak Swedish by default and presumably only speak another language when interacting with foreigners, to do otherwise would signal that you are not truly of Sweden.

Finland's colonization by Sweden is similar in several respects to the British colonization of Ireland. Both were used as a source of cheap labor, their local cultures denigrated and their populations designated non-white and racially inferior. During the mid 19th century in the United States, the Irish were seen as "Low-browed and savage, grovelling and bestial, lazy and wild, simian and sensual," belonging to "A separate caste or a 'dark' race, possibly originally African" (Roediger 1991:133). At the same time on the other side of the world, the Swedes were describing the Finns as, "dark-skinned and dark haired and dark-eyed"[26] and "perseverance, modesty, slowness, clumsiness, stubbornness and unpolished manners, and disposition to 'greed, envy and revenge'" (Catomeris 2004:88, translated from Swedish) were all decidedly Finnish traits. While the Irish were thought to have links to Africa, the Finns and Saami were thought to be the Lost Tribes of Israel, (Catomeris 2004:79) connecting their perceived racial inferiority to the Jews.

The Irish are also a classic example of a persecuted population associated with alcohol and violence that "became white" and accepted in the United States after other populations became more reviled. This narrative also applies to the Finns, whose image as dim-witted, knife-wielding drunkards was only shed in the 20th century once Finland's economy improved enough to rival its former colonial master and the arrival of non-Nordic immigrants in Sweden. Although

[26] Benjamin Franklin would likely have found the Swedish labeling of Finns as "dark-skinned" rather amusing given that he believed Swedes themselves to be of "a swarthy complexion" (Jacobson 1998:40). The fact that Finns have the same skin color as Swedes does not seem to matter.

the Irish did not elevate their status at the expense of other immigrants, but at the expense of African-Americans (Roediger 1991:148), the Finns' situation improved with the arrival of labor migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. While my informants tell me some joining with the Swedes in harassing the new arrivals did occur, the main cause of this was from the Swedes shifting their attention to the newly arrived, more exotic Others.

The Finns I spoke to during my time in Sweden said that they never personally felt as though they were discriminated against for being Finnish by the Swedes, though one young woman said she had a friend who was born and raised in Sweden but of Finnish descent that did feel this way. According to my informant, this woman was a teacher who had difficulty getting a job and was convinced that because she had a very Finnish name that employers assumed she was an immigrant, despite the fact that she did not even list Finnish among the languages she speaks.

Liisa, a young Finnish woman I spoke to, explained that many second-generation immigrant Finns did not maintain ties to their ancestral home in the same way that most other non-ethnic Swedes do. Because their parents moved to Sweden in the 1960s when Finland was still poor and uneducated, the children grow up with this negative view of their heritage as well as the Swedish historical interpretation of Finland as a rival country.

"Finland has been the bad guy in the [past], like they [the Swedes] have always looked down on Finnish people," Liisa explained, "which is really interesting because in this day Finland [is] better than Swed[en]."[27]

[27] Interview File 090528_02, recorded May 28, 2009.

The absence of fond tales of their homeland means these Finns do not return to visit Finland, which means their parents' views are all they have of the country. Despite having a homeland and culture they can be proud of, Liisa observed that many did not feel this way. Ålund and Schierup noticed this very problem in their analysis of immigrant youths: "The groups most in need of support are said to be the Turks and Finns, for both 'contain young people who are 'ashamed' of their culture'" (1991:69). Here we see what Camara Phyllis Jones identifies as internalized racism—an acceptance of the negative stereotypes others have about one's own group—playing out even among the most prosperous and well integrated of immigrant populations.

Kurds

The Kurdish population in Sweden consists almost exclusively of refugees from various countries. Most come from Turkey (Kurdish Association, personal communication), but the persecution of Kurds in Iran and Iraq has brought many from those countries to Sweden as well. It is difficult to be certain how many Kurds are currently living in Sweden due to the fact that the government only tracks the nationality of immigrants, not their ethnicity, but it is estimated there are about 50,000–60,000 in the country (Kurdish Institute of Paris 2006). This would make the Kurds about 4.3 percent of the total immigrant population.

According to several informants, Kurds enjoy a somewhat higher status in Sweden than other Middle Easterners. This may have to do with the fact that many of the Kurds who fled persecution were intellectuals and thus had greater skills coming into Sweden than uneducated labor migrants. Grace came to Sweden with her father in the middle of the 1980s while fleeing political persecution in Turkey. She explained to me that while there are still plenty of Swedes

who discern only between Swedes and foreigners, those who do have more nuanced views about immigrant populations generally like Kurds.

> Grace: People can think about Kurds like, yeah Kurds are [a] very extrovert[ed] population; they are, you know, achievers. They are seen in media, [the] positions they have, you know because of Kurds in the public sphere.[28]

One explanation for this is the highly politically active nature of the Kurds in Sweden. According to an official I spoke to at The Kurdish Association of Stockholm, while the Kurdish population in Sweden is not the largest in Europe, it is the most organized and politically involved. This means that they have slightly more direct influence in what the Swedish newspapers say about them than other immigrant populations have. A common concern voiced by informants from every group I interviewed dealt with the fact that because most Swedes do not interact with immigrants, the main context in which they hear about them is from the news, which unfortunately is replete with stories of immigrant crimes, often mentioning the nationalities or ethnicities of the perpetrators. Kurdish activism would then also mean that when demonstrations are held, the Swedish newspapers will mention it and when Swedes read the news, they are more likely to see Kurds associated with civil behavior rather than criminality. In fact, Grace explained that for a time Kurds were despised in Sweden due to an unsubstantiated claim by a police officer that a Kurd had assassinated Olof Palme, one of Sweden's most beloved prime ministers.[29] Here we have a classic example of the crimes of a single individual reflecting upon his entire ethnic group. Frantz Fanon's experience of having to be, "responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (Fanon 1967:112) seems perfectly translated in this

[28] Interview File 090526_01, recorded on May 26, 2009.
[29] Palme's assassin was never found and, in fact, there is not even a reliable description of the individual. The claim that a Kurd did it is pure conjecture and it is more likely a Swede is to blame.

case, with Kurdishness instead of Blackness. This monolithic stereotyping was even worse for the Kurds, because while one Arabic mugger then makes *all* Arabs muggers, this alleged Kurdish assassin then made *all* Kurds Palme's assassin.

The political activism and demonstrations of the Kurds in Sweden largely have to do with bringing the world's attention to the plight of their people at the hands of the governments of Iran, Turkey and formerly Iraq. This may also contribute to the generally positive opinion of Kurds in Sweden given that these demonstrations serve to distance themselves from Turks, Arabs and Persians. This may inadvertently have a similar effect as the Mississippi Delta Chinese's efforts to improve their racial standing (Loewen 1971) by emphasizing their lack of affiliation with the local African-American community. By differentiating themselves from Arabs and Turks[30], Kurds may also avoid the stereotypes of those groups: lazy, stupid and violent. This distancing may help the Kurdish image in Sweden but at the same time can hurt the images of other Middle Easterners. Kurdish complaints of the brutal and dogmatic regimes in their homeland may be seen to legitimize the negative stereotypes Swedes have of Turks, Arabs and Persians. Because their history and geographical proximity, Kurdish testimonies against these groups may seem more valid, leading many Swedes to the conclusion that their own prejudices are not inaccurate.

Yugoslavs

The immigrants from the former Yugoslavia present an interesting case in terms of immigrant populations. They were among the first major non-Nordic groups to come to Sweden as guest workers in the 1960s. Yugoslavs made up a fairly large percentage of the guest worker

[30] This is achieved at least in part by insisting upon a Kurdish identity rather than their country of origin.

population, around 60,000 individuals (Westin 2006). Sweden's policy toward migrant workers was a surprising departure from the policies of other countries such as the United States and Western European countries: they had no guest worker program. Rather than issuing work permits that required the person to leave once the permit expired, labor migrants were given incentives to stay and become Swedish citizens. While the US's Bracero program of 1942 (Tichenor 2002:174) recognized the need for Mexican laborers, they also took great measures to motivate people to leave once the work was done. Sweden's policy is likely due to the fact that Swedish labor unions worked with the government and decided, "importing cheap labor would not be allowed and that foreign workers were to enjoy the same wage levels and rights as Swedes, including access to unemployment benefits" (Westin 2006). If the workers were to be treated just like Swedes, then encouraging them to be full citizens would not be a drastic step. Many Yugoslavs chose this option, although some returned to Yugoslavia only to later find themselves coming back to Sweden as refugees.

In the early to mid-1990s, during the Yugoslav Wars, people from the former Yugoslavia came by the tens of thousands seeking asylum. A precise number of Yugoslavs in Sweden is somewhat difficult to determine, as the shift in demonyms after the Yugoslav Wars means that some are counted as Yugoslavs, and others as Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Macedonians. Combining all of these populations we arrive at a population of approximately 145,000 (*Statistiska centralbyrån* 2010), which is about 11 percent of all immigrants in Sweden. Some of my informants had previously been migrant workers and chose to flee to Sweden, having familiarity and largely positive impressions of the country and being able to recommend their friends and family to go there as well. Thus while Sweden was very welcoming of the Yugoslav

refugees to begin with, the number of those seeking refuge in Sweden would likely have been less had Yugoslavs not had as much familiarity with Sweden.

Despite the Swedish state's generosity to Yugoslav refugees, they still encountered bigotry and discrimination as foreigners. The discrimination faced by these refugees was not as severe as those faced by people from other non-European countries,[31] which was a result of several factors. The first had to do with the fact that Swedes, whose prejudices against others are often formed from inexperience, had several decades of contact with invited Yugoslav workers who had become citizens and started families in Sweden. As Sara, explains, older and more established populations faced less discrimination than more recent arrivals:

> Sara: I also think it's easier if you are from, for example [. . .] an immigrant group who arrived in here quite early . . . I think a lot of Swedes feel that they have a life history together and they are quite well known.[32]

While this claim basically repeats the dubious notion that Swedes are not racist, but xenophobic instead,[33] I believe there is a measure of truth to it as well. Immigrant populations that have been in Sweden longer tend to be more positively regarded than those who are relatively new. And though this may be ideological positioning to partially defend discrimination against non-ethnic Swedes, integration and contact with different groups can indeed quash judgments based on stereotyping. Of course, another major reason for the greater acceptance of Balkan refugees is that Yugoslavia was a European country, its inhabitants white and (partly) Christian. This made

[31] None of the Serbs or Bosnians I interviewed felt the Swedes had ever been outwardly hostile to them, though they did acknowledge experiencing more aversive forms of racism.
[32] Interview File 090325_01, recorded March 25, 2009.
[33] In this case, the suggestion seems to be that Swedes are not "racist" in that they do not believe in innate biological differences or fundamentally incompatible cultural differences between groups of people, but that they simply fear what they do not understand and what they have not been adequately exposed to. Fear of foreigners would ostensibly vanish once non-ethnic Swedes had become established enough that they would not be seen as outsiders to Swedes, while racism would continue regardless.

the official and public acceptance of Balkan war refugees very easy, and denying them safe haven would completely contradict the generous policies of opening their doors to people in need.

People from the Balkans and the former Yugoslavia are, as my informants tell me, often stereotyped as criminals, particularly the kind linked to black market and members of the "Yugo Mafia." What is quite significant, however, is that while several of my Bosnian informants are Muslim, none of them reported discrimination from Swedes on the basis of their faith. Given the surge in Islamophobia in the West post-9/11, the fact that Bosnian Muslims seem to have largely avoided this kind of discrimination outside of the Balkans suggests Swedes conflate being Muslim with being Middle Eastern.

CHAPTER 3

THE JANTE LAW

"I'll lift your arm and you'll lift mine, and in a Communist state of mind we're not worth more than anyone else but surely not worth less."- Hello Saferide, "2008"

I first came across the Jante Law in my research on Swedish society in preparation for a year studying at Uppsala University as part of an exchange program from the fall of 2005 to the spring of 2006. What I gleaned from books and web searches was that equality and moderation were Swedish values in much the same way it is said individualism and ambition are American values. Two phrases kept appearing in the literature pertaining to these ideas: *Lagom*, which I will discuss later, and the Jante Law. Initially, my understanding of what the Jante Law entailed was rather limited and I found the notion of forcing everyone to be exactly the same distasteful. Upon talking further with Swedes and a few Norwegians I learned that the central component is not to keep people from having different levels of achievement (i.e., not to discourage people from being lawyers rather than cashiers), but to avoid claims that such achievements prove a greater social or moral worth.

Despite its name, the Jante Law is not a literal law but a social code. At its most basic level, it is a cultural model that holds that one should not think he or she is better or more worthy than anyone else. Arrogance and self-aggrandizement are looked down upon while uniformity is valued. This "What-would-the-neighbors-think?" mentality is most often seen when it comes to material goods. For instance, an individual who recently got a promotion at work might want to buy a Porsche but because everyone else in his neighborhood owns Volvos, his different and

expensive car would be taken as a sign of boastfulness—that he believes he is better than others because he got a promotion and wants everyone to know it.

While it is always problematic to claim that everyone from a certain culture thinks or behaves in the same particular way, there are enough commonalities to allow a rough generalization to be made with the caveat that there will always be exceptions. Though Swedes are less inclined to claim the Jante Law has much sway over Swedish life nowadays, there are numerous contemporary scholars who are confident enough in the continuing influence of the Jante Law in Nordic society to mention them in published works (Avant and Knutsen 1993, Ahmadi 1998, Nelson and Shavitt 2002, Graham 2003, Abram 2008).

Origins

The term "the Jante Law" (*Jantelagen*)[34] was first coined by a Danish/Norwegian author, Aksel Sandemose (1936), and featured prominently in his darkly satirical book, *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*. In the book the author describes a small Norwegian town called Jante, modeled after his own hometown, where a set of "commandments," known collectively as the Jante Law, are strictly followed. These commandments are:

1. Do not think that *you* are something.
2. Do not think that *you* are as good as *us*.
3. Do not think that *you* are wiser than *us*.
4. Do not fancy *yourself* better than *us*.
5. Do not think that *you* know more than *us*.
6. Do not think that *you* are superior to *us*.

[34] *Jantelagen* (or *Janteloven* in Danish and Norwegian) is sometimes left untranslated in English texts or translated as "The Law of Jante." This is the chosen translation of the Alfred A. Knopf version of the novel that I read. I have chosen to translate it as "the Jante Law" not only because it is the most common translation I have found, but also because "the Law of Jante" implies that it is unique to the town of Jante, when this is clearly not the case.

7. Do not think that *you* are good at anything.

8. Do not laugh at *us*.

9. Do not think that anyone cares about *you*.

10. Do not think that *you* can teach *us* anything.

There is also an eleventh commandment later added as an addendum by the main character in Sandemose's book: "Do you not think that *we* know something about *you*?"

Though Sandemose put a term to this social code, he most certainly did not invent it. The admonition against thinking one is greater than the group is common among small towns and other close-knit agrarian communities like the ones Sweden had in its past.[35] In his book, Sandemose is scathingly critical of the Jante Law, comparing it to a poison gas that ruins childhoods and calls those that enforce it "the very essence of evil" (Sandemose 1936:83). In Jante, laughter and joy are suppressed as signs of pride; because you are happy when no one else is, you think you know something no one else knows and if you laugh then perhaps you are laughing at someone else. Injustices frequently go uncorrected because rather than speak out against something, the townspeople would remain neutral and uninvolved. The novel's protagonist notes this neutrality is illusory and is effectively siding with those in power, "They strove for domestic peace and delivered the weak unto Moloch" (Sandemose 1936:87) What I discovered from my interviews, though, was that most people today—even its staunchest critics—do not see the Jante Law as something so cruel. At best it reduces haughtiness and at worst it hampers people's abilities to reach their full potential, but most people do not ascribe malevolence to it as Sandemose does.

[35] This is because in small towns one's status is evaluated in relation to one's participation in the community's everyday activities (Form and Stone 1957:504). If no one in the community believes another person works any harder than they do, then someone who does think so will be viewed as pretentious.

I posit that it is not simply coincidental that the liberal welfare state only exists in Nordic countries and that these same countries have the Jante Law. In the past, Sweden was very hierarchical and knowing one's place was highly valued. For example, the expression "Cobbler, stick to your last" also exists in Swedish (Noack and Wigh 2007:30). This value was instilled in the largely agrarian Swedes, who came to believe that people were not supposed to change their station in life and that even relatively small advances in socioeconomic status would be disruptive to the social order. In the 18th and 19th centuries over 70 percent of Sweden's population was working in agriculture (Koblik 1975:9) and as a result when the country became industrialized and democratized the views of those farmers held great political influence. Because of this, a sense of egalitarianism emerged among the yeoman farmers, whose values and mindset became dominant in Sweden (Pederson 2009:1261), and consequently a concern over sameness and equality became a part of the national psyche. Pederson notes that, "the sameness is not founded on socialistic notions about equality, but rather on the feeling that no-one is better than his neighbour" (1262:2009). Thus, a culture that already believes that no one is better than anyone else—and where wealth and materialism are regarded as signs that someone thinks they are better than others—is going to be more inclined to adopt an economic system that favors equality of outcome, or at least equality of opportunity.

Taking cues from Weber's *Protestant Work Ethic*, I suggest the origin of the Jante Law and moral equality can be traced back to Lutheranism. Daun (1996) notes the perseverance of Lutheran thinking in Sweden well after the population had shifted to largely secular views. There is irony in that while Weber makes a compelling case for Protestantism priming the pump for

capitalism, the same conditions could have given rise to communism instead.[36] A population that believes hard work is a virtue in itself, eschews materialist gain and believes that no one can improve or diminish their inherent moral worth would be the ideal for a well functioning communist society. Weber attributes a societal decrease in piety around the same time as the Industrial Revolution to the rise of the capitalist system (2003:175), suggesting that if Protestant aversion to materialism and the preoccupation with divine salvation had lasted longer, the reaction to the Industrial Revolution would have been different.

Habitus

Several informants of Swedish and foreign backgrounds believed nearly every country has a system like the Jante Law (except for the United States, as some of them claim) but only the Nordic countries have put a name to it. While it is certainly true that most cultures have social mores against arrogance and narcissism, the Jante Law is actually more than that. Expressing nearly any form of pride or confidence is unnatural for Swedes under the Jante Law. In the United States it would not be unusual to say, "I make the best brownies!" Though the person would rarely believe their brownies are truly "the best," he is confident enough in his culinary abilities to proclaim them to others. In Swedish society, not only would the positive self-assessment not occur, but he might undercut any praise his brownies receive by stating, "Oh, that's kind of you to say. They're a little dry, though, don't you think?" Many times this is more than false modesty and truly reflects the person's self-opinion.

Habitus is, as Sherry Ortner, puts it, "a deeply buried structure that shapes people's dispositions to act in such ways that they wind up accepting the dominance of others, or of 'the

[36] Even though none of the Nordic states have a truly communist economy or society, social welfare democracies would be, according to Marx, a stepping stone to communism.

system,' without being made to do so" (2006:5). This is an apt description of how the Jante Law functions; people do not think about "the Jante Law" and certainly not about its ten commandments when interacting with others, but behave accordingly most of the time. Its influences on people's practices is most readily seen in their spending habits where, as mentioned above, they will eschew more extravagant items in favor of modest ones so their purchases will not arouse envy from their peers. It informs every person's individual sensibilities but each individual ends up thinking as the whole (Bourdieu 1977). This has been recognized for a long time, as the main character in *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* is haunted by the fact that no matter how far away he travels, Jante is always with him. This means that the true influencing power of the Jante Law comes not from others watching and judging you so much as it is a fear that others are doing so. It functions primarily through self-government rather than through an external apparatus.

While this is a very deeply rooted mindset and set of practices that are part of the normative behavior in Sweden, it is no longer *doxic*. There is an "awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs" (Bourdieu 1977:164) in Swedish society due to contact with immigrants, particularly in larger cities, as well as the aforementioned prevalence of foreign—especially American—media. Because *doxa* is relegated to the "universe of the undiscussed (undisputed)" (Bourdieu 1977:168) a discussion of the merits of such a normative system by its very nature demonstrates the ability to consider alternatives. One of the main themes in *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* is how detrimental the Jante Law is to a person's psyche and how bizarre it must seem to those not from Jante. People are peripherally conscious of the Jante Law and aware that there are other ways of thinking, but they are not always embraced, even by those who are critical of it.

The impression I got from several interviews and informal conversations with Swedes is that the Jante Law is a relic of past generations, important to them but not something that anyone younger than perhaps 30 would have incorporated into their worldview. I was somewhat concerned with this assessment since the literature I encountered and my own observations led me to believe it was still an influential force in society. My fears that my data were no longer relevant were allayed near the very end of my fieldwork when I went to the small town of Rättvik with several college friends for Midsummer. We stayed at the summer home of one of our friend's parents, who graciously hosted all eight of us. At the dinner table the mother began gossiping, "Did you *see* what the neighbors just bought? Who do they think they *are*?" One of my friends rejoined, "Yeah, you have to be understanding of other people's situations." From my perspective as an ethnographer, I believe there are two possible reasons for this response: either she agreed with our host's view that the neighbors should not have bought something that might be considered ostentatious and therefore conforms to the Jante Law, or she simply said what was socially acceptable rather than speak her mind and is influenced by the Jante Law's doctrine that one should not draw attention to oneself. I am inclined, based upon my personal reading of the situation, to believe that the former explanation is the most likely.

Calling this social code a "law" strongly hints at there being some kind of enforcement in place. If there were no consequences for violating the Jante Law, not thinking you are someone special would simply be advice rather than a "commandment." Depending on the situation, this enforcement may take the form of passive-aggressive behavior, disassociation or sometimes correction through more official channels. Nearly every Swede knows the rules of conduct that accompany the Jante Law, even if they do not know the commandments themselves. Most people follow them, though there are naturally always some who choose to defy the Jante Law.

The Swedes I spoke to told me that among younger generations, the Jante Law is becoming less prevalent as materialism and individualism become more dominant. The trend may indeed be moving in this direction, but it is still the older Swedes who are teaching the young. Sara, a Swede in her thirties who worked closely with immigrant youths from the suburbs, had a very visible example of how this can affect people at an early age.

"I had a meeting with my son's teacher when he started school. I had to laugh about it because he talks a lot." Sara said. "All the time. And he asks questions, always, always and pick[s] up new words and stuff. And when he started school, we had an extra meeting with the teacher and they [she] said, 'We have a problem with him.' And I said, 'What's the problem?' [The teacher said] 'He says strange things.' And I go, 'Uh-oh! Bad words!' And I go, 'What type of . . . ?'" she laughed and then quoted the teacher, "'He talks a lot. He says a lot of words that the other children don't know. And he's *proud* of it!'"

"OK." I said, smiling at the absurdity.

"That was the big issue! He had too many complex words, and that was not good." Sara continued, with a smile on her face, too, "And that's the one way you can see how the *Jantelagen* hit the 6-year-old boy who liked to talk, you know? So she wanted us to talk to him to not talk in that way. But we didn't. He can talk however he wants."[37]

This provides an excellent example of a child's interaction with one of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses: the school. The teacher, as an indirect agent of the state, hails the boy as someone she has the authority, even the duty, to impose a set of behaviors upon. This would make the Jante Law part of an ideology, something taught in schools and reinforced by

[37] Interview File 090325_01, recorded March 25, 2009.

other members of society. It is a way of thinking that so much of the population has taken to heart that it has become a default way of being, of thinking and behaving.

It is important to note that Althusser's ideology is quite a nuanced concept that includes what might be considered a rational ideology, something deliberate and conscious, and what he calls "material rituals," which is analogous to *habitus*.[38] The Swedish state ideology—that no one is inherently better or worse than anyone else—can be can be rationally explained and framed as part of a belief in human rights, but the *habitus* that makes a certain vocabulary seem "incorrect" is harder to discuss; it just *feels* right to do things that way. The teacher seems to take the Jante Law for granted, not feeling the need to explain *why* being proud of knowing more is a bad thing or that it might not be considered a problem to everyone. Her attempt (perhaps ultimately a successful one) to influence his speech patterns would likely include not just utilizing a more limited vocabulary but also the typically Swedish reticence. Before a person is old enough to ask why they are to speak in such a manner, they are socialized into the norm of middle class Swedish speech patterns, which are taken for granted thereafter.

If *habitus* and "material rituals" are comparable concepts and the latter is part of Ideological State Apparatuses, then it is not surprising that the Jante Law can be taught in school (though again, not by name) like conventional manifestations of ideology. This is congruent to how Marcel Mauss, the author who originally defined *habitus*, saw this phenomenon function. It is not simply what is passively acquired but also what one is learned through deliberate inculcation. Mauss conceived of it primarily as learned bodily behaviors that one gets from watching others. "What takes place is a prestigious imitation. The child, the adult, imitates

[38] Althusser's example of material rituals involves the procedures for greeting friends, which are so common to us that we never think about the individual steps or why we greet people the way we do.

actions which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him" (Mauss 1934:73). Not everyone successfully imitates, however, and sometimes those with authority feel the need to address what they see as deficiencies in the child's actions. For instance, Mauss recalled being reprimanded by one of his teachers for walking like an "idiot" with his hands open (1934:72). In the case of Sara's son, however, the ideology dictates acceptable practices of speech and vocabulary, as well as one's sense of pride or humility. This imposition of a certain moral order on children illustrates how the State, through the school, can influence the mainstream *habitus*.

Sara had previously explained to me that she came from a background that taught her to be more critically thinking rather than conservative and traditional-minded and as a result the Jante Law was not as important to her as it might be for others. This can be seen in her decision not to censure her son's precocious vernacular but she was very adamant that Swedish children, herself and her son included, are instructed not to brag. Here we see how the Jante Law influences self-government even if one does not agree with the social code. Less traditionally-oriented Swedes who "believe that they are something" are still products of mainstream Swedish culture and are encouraged to downplay their achievements, even though they might not be privately encouraged to actually believe their own modest words.

Among adults who decide they are part of the "Us," the consequences for those they see "breaking" the Jante Law can be much more severe than the aforementioned parent-teacher conferences. This is particularly true for immigrants, who do not know of or understand the Jante Law; they are just working to get ahead in life. For many Swedes, immigrants are already outsiders and perhaps viewed with suspicion from day one. For those succeeding and daring to think they are something, the response of Swedes can be surprising. Grace, a Kurdish woman

employed in a government office who has been living in Sweden for around twenty years, made some very intriguing observations. She noticed that the Jante Law's influence was alive and well in society, particularly with regard to envy over money and material possessions. The offended individuals assumed their immigrant neighbors were scamming the tax and welfare system to get more money and anonymously reported the alleged infractions to the local authorities.

"It's very funny, you know, it's quite amazing. I didn't know about this myself before I got kind of positions. Many things in Sweden are based on somebody calling, like *Försäkringskassan* (Swedish Social Insurance Agency) *Arbetsförmedlingen* (The Employment Office), *Migrationsverket* (The Immigration Bureau) people are calling and saying this person got [money from] *skatteverket* (The Tax Agency)" Grace quoted some of these callers in Swedish "'He's working for blah.' 'He's in Chile.' 'He's not sick.' Anonymous tips." She paused and continued in English. "Do you understand? There are many people calling, 'Yeah, you know my neighbor, he's getting money from you but he has a store. He's working there, he's earning money there.'"

"Mm, OK. I see, they're . . . tattling?" I asked.

"Yeah! A lot!" It seemed that was the word she was looking for. "More than one can think, you know? Especially after, you know, after these common family weekends, like after Christmas, Easter, then these phones are so much . . . They go warm, people are calling."

"Huh!"

"So this is kind of *Jantelagen*, you know? You cannot accept that somebody else can get

away with something." She said, later adding "And they call themselves 'defender of the good citizenships.'"[39]

Despite what sounded like Swedes accusing their immigrant neighbors of welfare fraud if they appeared too successful, Grace did not see this practice as particularly racist since she understood this as connected to the Jante Law and consistent with how Swedes would behave among themselves. What is significant to keep in mind is that Grace noted that these anonymous calls occur most frequently after holidays, when gifts and food become visible markers of spending habits. While there would certainly be nothing wrong with reporting a neighbor who is scamming the welfare system, the fact that so many of these calls occur around certain days suggest that they are not based on reasonable evidence and rather the result of assumptions. It is likely that these anonymous callers are already suspicious of the behavior of foreigners not only to the country, but to the city. Unfortunately, this petty envy and suspicion is the main manifestation of the Jante Law that many immigrants see.

It is common to distrust and resent people who change their status too quickly, especially if the person already has established friendships and neighborly relations. Swedes do not have a problem with being someone's subordinate—their society would cease to function if a CEO had equal *authority* as an entry-level employee—but they generally have difficulty abiding a coworker whom they have known for some time getting a raise or promotion.[40] This conditional acceptance of status differences is applicable among neighbors, too; if residential areas are generally inhabited by people of the same economic standing and they live together for years, someone who is upwardly mobile can be seen as haughty and if they are advancing themselves

[39] Interview File 090526_01, recorded on May 26, 2009.
[40] For this reason, new management positions are more often filled by transfers than by existing employees.

too quickly they can be suspected of doing something against the law, as in the case of the immigrants being "tattled on."

Equality

One of the main research questions that framed my fieldwork dealt with how Swedes could follow the Jante Law, believing they are not better than others, and hold racist opinions at the same time. It seems as though these are contradictory ideas, yet there is little evidence of cognitive dissonance among Swedes regarding this. Indeed, few Swedes had even considered the problem of how these deep-seated, mutually exclusive ideas can coexist.

Fear and mistrust of outsiders have frequently been major contributors to racism throughout history. In everyday discourse xenophobia refers to a fear of foreigners, or people from other countries, but it can operate on a much more local level, down to suspicion of a new neighbor that moved from another town. Naturally, this xenophobia hinders inclusion into the community and even without any racial or ethnically motivated distrust the newcomer may be regarded as separate from the rest of the neighborhood. A common identity is formed by the more established members of a community; creating an "us" to contrast against a "them" or possibly a "him" if there is but one outsider.

The Jante Law centers on the individual avoiding the disapproval of an unspecified "Us." I suggest that how a Swede defines this Us can seriously affect how they view other people in the community. This is best illustrated in relation to the commandment, "Do not think that *you* are as good as *us*." If the person does not consider herself part of the Us then she will regard this as a statement directed at her and focus more on keeping her own attitude and behavior in line with Swedish norms, whereas if the person counts herself in the Us then she is the one (perhaps not

literally) saying it to others and is more likely to be passing judgment on the neighbor who bought a new car. People (such as immigrants) who are wholly unaware of the Jante Law's behavioral codes will not be affected by these internalizations but will almost certainly violate the established norms and inadvertently mark themselves as someone who "thinks they are someone." This means that Swedes will regard them with suspicion and possibly antipathy over not behaving in a socially acceptable manner. More importantly, someone from outside the community regardless of their ethnicity is automatically not part of the Us while everyone from the community, by default, is. The different layers and meanings of community play an important role here; if a Swede from Stockholm moves to a small town then he is an outsider, but if a foreigner moves in too then the Stockholmer is part of the community of Sweden rather than an outsider to that specific town. In this sense "Us" can be taken to mean Swedes as a whole and the command "Do not think that *you* are as good as *us*" becomes explicitly xenophobic. If Swedes think they are part of this Us writ large, the Jante Law does not contradict racism but may actually encourage it.

It should be noted, however, that the broader applications of the Jante Law are usually quite positive. The most significant product of this egalitarian mindset is, of course, Sweden's gender equality laws as well as its welfare state. "Do not fancy *yourself* better than *us*" when spoken by women or the working class becomes an empowering slogan against sexism and classism. Though wage disparities between men and women still exist in Sweden, the 1995 Human Development Report designated Sweden as the most gender-equal country in the world (Bernhardt et al. 2007:98).[41]

[41] Bernhardt et al.'s research did not note that attitudes toward gender equality varied among different ethnic groups, with second-generation immigrants from countries such as Turkey being "significantly less likely to favor gender

Likewise, access to healthcare and education are rights of all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic status. It has been said that such ideologies are part and parcel with socialism, that no one is better than anyone else. To a certain degree this is true. I spoke with Zlatko, a middle-aged Bosnian refugee who invited me to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Cultural Association. Zlatko had lived in Sweden for nearly fifteen years and briefly was a guest worker in Sweden in the 1980s. He explained to me that, for him, the Jante Law was not an alien and bizarre concept as many other immigrants had seen it, but something he was already familiar with in socialist Yugoslavia. It was unclear, however, if the ideology was taken to heart or simply a slogan to the Bosnians. For mainstream Swedes, these are not just legislations or slogans; the majority of Swedish people truly believe that men and women are equal (Daun 1996:154) and that a poor factory worker has the same rights and value as a wealthy chemist (Daun 1996:179). Whether or not this equality pertains only to Swedes or is extended to foreigners and non-ethnic Swedes has yet to be determined.[42]

Radical right-wing populist parties have risen all over Europe in response to changing economic and cultural landscapes. These changes have also coincided with immigration from the Global South into Europe and as a consequence many people from groups that may lose from a change in the socioeconomic status quo come to support these right-wing parties. Swank and Betz (2003) argue that universal welfare states,[43] with their generous and inclusive benefits for the country's inhabitants, serve to create a political atmosphere that is not conducive to far right parties. Economic forces aside, societies with universal welfare systems also benefit from

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equality in the workplace and in society at large" (2007:105). Consequently wage disparities would be greater in such populations.

[42] A partial answer to this question can be seen in the acceptance of the Finns in modern society. While they were persecuted in the past, Finns now frequently intermarry with Swedes and live and work alongside them in every level of society.

[43] These states include Norway, Sweden, Denmark and, to a lesser degree, Finland. Recall that these countries also have the Jante Law.

"values of equal respect and concern embodied in programme structure, broadly targeted universal benefits, carefully adapted delivery organizations and participatory administrative processes achieve relatively high levels of contingent consent from the citizenry. Solidarity, trust and confidence in state intervention are promoted" (Swank and Betz 2003:225).They are quick to note, however, that although the trend of foreign immigration leading to increased support for far right parties is present in all observed European countries—including those with universal welfare—this trend was weakest in universal welfare states (Swank and Betz 2003:239). These findings corroborate the observations made by Ålund and Schierup that "until recently immigrants [to Sweden] have largely been protected from open forms of populist racism. In this sense their situation has probably been better than in any other European country" (1991:23). Although the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*), a nationalist anti-immigration party, have gained popularity since these two publications came out, they have not yet entered Swedish parliament.[44] Despite this increase in support, however, the political influence of the Sweden Democrats is not as high as Austria's Freedom Party (17.5 percent of the votes for the National Council in 2008) or Italy's Lega Nord (8.1 percent of the votes for the senate in 2008).[45]

The universal welfare state serves as an equalizing force so that the gap between rich and poor is not as great and therefore those who are "better" are not *too much* better. Even the trust in the state can be seen as a consequence of the Jante Law's insistence on deference to the greater authority known as "Us." Swedes generally trust their government and officials (Bruno *et al.* 2003) or at least believe they have the best interests of the people in mind. The anti-

[44] As of June 2010, polls indicate they have 5.7 percent of the vote, four percent is needed to enter parliament, and may be voted in during the 2010 election (*Sverigedemokraterna* 2010).
[45] Álvarez-Rivera 2010.

establishment sentiments of certain radical right-wing parties are less prevalent in a society with "Do not think that *you* can teach *us* anything" in the back of their minds.

These characteristics are to be expected from a society with the Jante Law. Equality and respect clearly follow from a system where no one is to be thought of as superior to anyone else and concern and support for those who have fallen upon hard times is also a consequence of this mentality. Just as most Swedes are made uncomfortable at the thought of someone being superior to them, they are similarly bothered at the thought of someone in an inferior position. The lower position of one person automatically confers a higher position upon another and thus puts Swedes in the undesirable situation of being better than someone else. Sara clarified this dynamic.

"With *Jantelagen* it's very hard because you have to blend in in the right way. You know, you have—you can see immigrants who are *too* humble."

"How can you—can you be too humble? Can you explain that?" I asked.

Sara said, "If you are too, if you [make] yourself much smaller to the other person, then you if you . . . If I make [myself] smaller—you are Swede now—" she interjected in this hypothetical example, "and if I made [myself] smaller and I say, 'Oh you are so great, and I am so blah, blah, blah, blah . . . '"

"Ah, OK."

"Then I will make you feel unsure. And you never make one of the Swedes unsure, you know? We don't like that, it feels 'unsafety.'" Sara laughed, "So that's not good."

"So you would make them feel unsure by praising them—?"

"By praising up. Because we have learned since we were children that we shouldn't be praised up."

"Ahh, I see."

"So then we don't know. 'Oh, stop . . . '" she acted out the classic sheepish response to praise, complete with downward eyes and muttering. "So that's not good. But if you brag about yourself too much, and if . . . you say, 'I can take that! I am very good at that! I take that very big, difficult job, 'cause I'm the best one to do it.' That's not good. So [someone else needs] to say, 'You should do the job.'"[46]

It is not simply being excessively humble that can disrupt the sense of equality Swedes strive to maintain, but also self-deprecation. This, combined with directly praising a Swede, challenges the Jante Law by identifying people as better or worse than the average person and can potentially invite scorn or envy from any witnesses. This situation can quickly become even more uncomfortable for Swedes given a general aversion to conflict or disagreement, which would both call attention to oneself and implicitly suggest that one person has something to teach the other. If a foreigner's praise is rejected by a Swede and the foreigner repeats it, the Swede would be in an unwinnable situation where they would feel uncomfortable accepting the praise but would feel equally uncomfortable repeatedly contradicting someone.

[46] Interview File 090325_01, recorded March 25, 2009.

CHAPTER 4

SMYGRASISM AND STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION

"The systematic racism of silence, where you just don't get your way. That's the only thing that happens. Nobody says anything."-Stanislav. Serbian lawyer, 29.[47]

In Sweden today there are not many immigrants or non-ethnic Swedes who would claim that the Swedes are as tolerant and understanding of foreigners as they would like to believe. That, in fact, strikes at the very heart of the problem: Swedes will nearly always profess a belief in equality and holding no prejudiced thoughts against those of a different ethnicity while immigrants experience discrimination at the hands of those same Swedes. It is not that they are necessarily lying, but that their beliefs in equality conflict with prejudices born out of inexperience with foreigners and sensationalist media coverage of immigrants in Sweden. Their prejudices against immigrants can be subconscious and thus difficult to pin down. Swedes call this kind of discrimination *smygrasism*, or loosely translated "sneaky racism."[48] The term does not have an exact translation in English because it covers a wide range of phenomena: from what is known as aversive or colorblind racism, to a more literal form of sneaky racism of saying politically correct things in public and racist things in private. In some cases the term can apply to people saying incontrovertibly racist things but denying the charge of racism and using the term xenophobic instead. Björkqvist and Rosén noted this phenomenon as well, quoting a gang

[47] Interview File 090415_01, recorded April 15, 2009.
[48] Aside from not wanting to lose something in translation, I have decided to leave *smygrasism* untranslated because it is a colloquial term in Swedish. It is something that could be used in common parlance in Sweden whereas in English similar concepts like "New Racism" are unlikely to be used by anyone outside of academia.

member thusly: "They've called us racists, but we're not. I've looked up the word. Perhaps we're hostile to foreigners" [49] (Pred 2000:82).

Smygrasism, like the rest of New Racism—"a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences" (Balibar 21:1991)—came about primarily because of the end of colonialism and the arrival of former colonial subjects into Europe. Sweden, however, did not have any colonies in the 20th century and did not experience significant immigration until the 1960s. While the rationale for racism changed with decolonization, the same vocabulary was still used. It was the influence of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which made open displays of racism in Sweden highly unacceptable. [50]

The Swedish aversion to conflict is also partially responsible for *smygrasism* as it makes discussion of race practically forbidden. Indeed, "race" in Sweden is an outdated word and, in my initial interviews, when I had asked, "Is it difficult to talk about race or ethnicity?" people were either somewhat perturbed by this question or simply corrected me by saying that race was no longer a commonly held concept. That is to say the word "race" in Sweden conjures up ideas of craniometry and classifications like "Negroid," "Caucasoid" and "Mongoloid." Some Swedes even told me that there were only a handful of racists in Sweden but that discrimination against immigrants was a widespread problem. Because racism in Sweden is popularly defined as the belief in biologically distinct races of humans, no one would ever use the word "race" when

[49] The word for xenophobic in Swedish, *främlingsfientliga*, translates literally to "foreigner hostile." Pred likely chose to translate this as "hostile to foreigners."

[50] Sweden has historically compared itself to the United States in areas like civil rights and humanitarianism (Pred 2000:57). They are also large consumer of American media and as a result when the United States had the Civil Rights Movement, the effects quickly spread to Sweden, as well. One example of this is the switch in the term for a black person from *neger* (Negro) to *svart* (literally, 'black'). *Neger* had no deliberately pejorative connotation, but because of the similarity in sound and appearance to "nigger" the Swedes switched to *svart*. Because of the abandonment of the word by those not wishing to appear racist, *neger* has since become a derogatory term. (Sawyer 2002:30)

speaking of someone of another ethnic group unless they believed in such categorizations. Not surprisingly, it is quite easy for even the most ardent xenophobe to honestly believe they are not racist: in their mind the only "racists" are Nazis and their ilk.[51]

It is also worth noting that while *smyg-* means stealthy or sneaky, the term for a closeted homosexual is *smygbög*, meaning *smygrasism* can also be understood as "closeted racism." In the same way that the term "in the closet" when referring to homosexuals can mean both those who identify themselves as LGBT but do not openly share this identity with others as well as those who are not yet aware of their sexual orientation, the Swedish understanding of *smygrasism* suggests people who know their beliefs are racist and do not publicly voice them and people who are unaware of their racist prejudices are both "closet racists."

According to Malin, a Swedish journalist in her late fifties, *smygrasism* includes institutionalized discrimination as well as simply hiding conventionally racist opinions.

"Is there a difference between racism and *smygrasism* besides . . . just kind of not admitting it?" I asked.

"Yeah there is." Malin explained "For example, when it's sort of *institutionaliserad* (institutionalized) or sort of there's a structure, it's definitely racism like—oh, *Sverigedemokraterna* (The Sweden Democrats), they are definitely racists."

"How so?"

"*Sverigedemokraterna*, they are definitely racists." She repeated.

[51] This is not entirely consistent with Jane Hill's Folk Theory of Racism (2008:6) because while "racism" in Swedish can mean any general bigotry against others, "race" only means biologically distinct groups of humans. As such, the term "race relations" would sound very antiquated.

"Because they institutionalize?"

"Yes. They have—they can say it's *smygrasism* 'cause they are trying to wash their program so it doesn't appear that they are the racists that they actually are. And *smygrasism* does exist in other parties, as well. For example [. . .] I think it was 2002. The election in 2002. They had a hidden microphone and they talked with Sweden Democrats or right-wing . . . *Folkpartiet* or something like that and heard what they said off the record. And it was definitely *smygrasism* because it wasn't official."

"Ah, I see, I see."

Malin gave examples of what was said, "'Just get them out of Sweden, they're taking our jobs! They are having so many wives, they are beating their children!' and so they said. And it was definitely *smygrasism* and it definitely would have been racism if they said it openly, publicly."

"OK."

"They even denied they had said it, although they had it on the tape recorder."[52]

It is for this reason I do not consider smygrasism to simply be the Swedish word for covert racism, although the latter is certainly part of the former. Covert racist discourse may be described as "a way of speaking that Whites do not understand as racist, but which works to reproduce negative stereotypes of people of color (Hill 2008:119). This language is only covert to Whites, however, and the actual targets of this form of racism—immigrants and people of color—can clearly see it for what it is. Because saying, "immigrants beat their children" is

[52] Interview File 090422_01, recorded April 22, 2009.

obviously racist even to Whites, the politicians' remarks cannot be covert racist discourse. The politicians themselves knew what they were saying was racist; hence why they only said it in what was supposed to be a private meeting and denied ever saying it after it was made public.

The difficulty in discussing immigrants in Sweden has led many people to present a politically correct façade in public while only speaking their mind in private, among friends and other people with whom there is a measure of trust and confidence. Since they cannot be certain if a stranger also feels as they do, many Swedes have developed codes that enable them to obtain information that is otherwise unacceptable to publicly ask. For instance, Sara noted perfectly innocuous questions that have loaded meanings that many Swedes understand, but taken on their own are impossible to denounce as racist.

"I think they can talk about it [immigrants]. Absolutely. But in a very quiet, diplomatic way." Sara laughed. "Yeah. You can say, 'Is it a good school?' if you go, if you move into a new area, then you—the Swedes will ask you, 'Is it a good school?' And when they ask that, they don't ask if the teacher have good education and so on. The question really means, 'Are there a lot of immigrants?'"

"Huh. And people will know what that means when people ask, 'Is that a good . . . '?" I mused. "And if somebody doesn't know this code? If that, if—yeah, could somebody honestly ask the question and honestly mean like, 'Is it a good school?'"

"Is it a good school?"

"Yeah, then . . . ?"

"Yeah, it's quite interesting, because if people then ask *me* that, and that happens quite a lot, it's 'Do you know this school? Do you know this . . . ?' Because they know that I work for the city and engaged in school questions and so on." She explained.

"Mmhmm?"

"I always try to, to [pretend] that I *don't* understand the question. I always say, 'Yeah! There are good teachers, you know they have worked here for quite long time blah, blah, blah, blah.' And you can feel the people growing more and more irritated: 'Yes, but you know, is it a *good* school? Are they ***good students***?'" Sara said as she raised her eyebrows and leaned inward, parodying the inquirer's attempt to clue her in to what they really wanted to know.[53]

Jane Hill noted these coded messages in everyday speech to convey racial sentiments (2008:33). Shortly after my interview with Sara, I had an encounter with a Swede who was considering moving into the apartment where I lived in the immigrant suburb of Sätra. While I was giving him a tour of the rooms he asked me if it was a good neighborhood, to which I said yes, it was a nice calm neighborhood and the only complaint would be the many seagulls. It was only later that I wondered if "good neighborhood" was intended as the subtly loaded phrase that Sara had explained or if he was making a more legitimate inquiry. Whatever he meant by the question, ultimately neither he nor any Swede moved into the apartment after I moved out.

Comparing and contrasting Malin's and Sara's examples of racist discourse will allow me to better articulate the distinction I make between *smygrasism* and covert racism. We can use Jane Hill's "I'm not a racist, but . . ." frame to determine whether an utterance is covertly racist, "If the frame works, the utterance is visibly racist [. . .] If it does not work but the analysis can

[53] Interview File 090325_01, recorded March 25, 2009.

show that racist meanings must be conveyed by the phrase, we have encountered covert racist discourse" (2008:120).

The "good school" example relies on both people being aware of certain stereotypes and popular opinions in order to properly understand the question. Since "Is it a good school?" is a perfectly legitimate query, it provides a cover for the person asking in case they should be accused of being racist. Naturally, the very point of saying, "I'm not a racist, but . . ." is to allay other people's suspicions that one is racist, no matter how that sentence is finished. A covertly racist statement does not need the disclaimer and adding it would be self-defeating, as saying, "I'm not a racist, but is it a good school?" would only draw attention to its possible racist interpretations.

The idea that a "good" school being one that is predominantly Swedish, and that a "bad" school is one with large numbers of immigrants, is an example where racist stereotypes are indirectly indexed in an otherwise innocuous phrase. Sara said the true meaning of the question was, "Are there a lot of immigrants?" but in order for that explanation to make sense, one must already know the stereotypes of unruly and destructive immigrants and that their presence makes a school or neighborhood undesirable. Even the word "immigrant," as I previously mentioned, is an implicitly negative term for a certain group of foreigners (the arrival of Danish immigrants would not turn a neighborhood "bad," for instance). A more precise reading of "Is it a good school?" would be something like, "Does this school have many Muslim or non-White children, whose violent and backward customs may be a negative influence on my child and threaten her safety?"

While the "good school" example represents a classic case of covert racist discourse, the "immigrants beat their children" example provided by Malin better illustrates *smygrasism*. Its meaning is plain as it provides its own assumption rather than have the listeners draw upon their own knowledge of popular opinion. "I'm not a racist, but immigrants beat their children" makes sense as a qualifier in this case as it anticipates the charge of racism. As Hill (2008:46) points out, if truth of the statement can be debated, then the speaker might be thought to have racist opinions and consequently cannot be covert racist discourse.

Malin stated that had the politicians' statements been made in public they would have been racist but because they were supposed to be kept from general knowledge they are *smygrasist*. Thus, while all instances of covert racism can be called *smygrasism*, not everything that is called *smygrasism* is covert racism. There is no specific phrase in English to cover the phenomenon of attempting to prevent public knowledge of a statement made in private specifically because one was fully aware of its racist nature, aside from simple hypocrisy.

Even in instances where non-racist topics are being discussed, many Swedes will still hesitate to freely enter into a dialog. This reluctance to discuss Swedes and immigrants often stemmed from an initial inability to properly define the groups. Perhaps they did not want to be led into a trap of calling people Swedes and immigrants and have me imply they do not see immigrants as "real" Swedes. They would at first stumble around the topic, laughing nervously and rhetorically asking, "Well, what is a Swede, really?" It was only when I offered the term "non-ethnic Swede" that they stopped qualifying every statement and really began talking to me. Despite people's claims of not recognizing anyone as different, they knew exactly which specific group of people I was asking about and were able to discuss them in fair amount of detail once the proper (i.e., "non-racist") term was found.

Word choice is clearly important when speaking about racism and immigrants, as the wrong words can give the impression that one is a bigot. The fear of saying the wrong thing can almost paralyze a conversation, as I observed with Lena, a Swedish teacher in her late forties who claimed to literally not know the meaning of racism.

> Kevin: How do you define racism?
>
> Lena: [laugh] I'm not sure! [long pause] No, I don't know. What it means to me, or . . . ?
>
> K: Yeah.
>
> L: That you believe that another . . . that another culture . . . [pause, then laugh] I can't explain it! Um . . . [pause] That one comments that someone is so and so and so. [pause] I don't know! What is racism? I'll have to look the word up in a book. When you think poorly of someone because they—I don't know. No, I can't [laugh] I can't explain it. [pause] To treat someone outside of . . . I don't know. What is racism? [laugh] [pause] When you can't treat those who are different, who are from another country . . . that's racism. I don't know! [laughs] I can't . . . [54][55]

I refuse to believe an educator of her age and experience who works in a school with immigrant children does not know what racism is. The fact that she came close to providing a definition of racism several times but never finished her sentence suggested to me that she did at least have some definition in mind but perhaps it conflicted with her own belief that she does not have racist opinions. Lena's response struck me as reminiscent of Bonilla-Silva's observation of "incoherent" whites (2002:43) speaking about racism. Her frequent pauses were punctuated with

[54] Interview File 090616_01, recorded June 16, 2009.
[55] I have chosen to present this dialog in this format rather than the narrative style I employed for all other conversations in order to demonstrate the nature and frequency of Lena's disfluency. By presenting the exchange in this format, I hope to make it clearer as to why I found Lena's inability to provide a definition for racism so remarkable.

laughter, perhaps at the seeming absurdity of not knowing what racism is, but presumably knowing it is bad. After the interview concluded, Lena asked me what racism was and I gave her a basic definition that was very similar to the ones she almost said.

Even when not speaking about particularly sensitive topics Swedes are known to sometimes fumble over word choice in their interactions with people of other national and ethnic backgrounds. The fear of offending someone (and presumably being seen as racist) seemingly looms so great in the minds of Swedes that even asking simple questions becomes a delicate procedure. One Serbian lawyer in his late twenties explained it this way:

> Stanislav: Even asking someone where you're from can sometimes be a no-no. It's, they are feeling like it's—they're almost apologizing when they ask it . . ."I'm sorry, where are you from?" "I'm sorry—now *don't* take this wrong—but where are you from?" "I hear a little east European . . ." that's to me. I tell you, well, yeah, and I don't see any problems with it. I'm just laughing.[56]

Stanislav went on to explain that this excessive cautiousness bothered him; he believed that only someone with something to hide would be so preoccupied with letting something slip up. He reasoned that a truly non-prejudiced person would be guileless and more willing to possibly make a mistake when dealing with foreigners. This would certainly fit into the model of conscious *smygrasism*; as opposed to holding unconscious prejudices, these Swedes are deliberately hiding their feelings that they know to be unacceptable. I should note, though, that I have also been asked in a similarly overly cautious manner about my own ethnic background by

[56] Interview File 090415_01, recorded April 15, 2009.

a 1.5-generation[57] Chinese immigrant in Sweden, so the phenomenon is not restricted just to Swedes.

One potential explanation for this concern over offending someone by asking his or her national and ethnic background may be due to a hierarchical ranking of people from other parts of the world. Such thoughts are vestiges of "Old Racism" and its Social Darwinist ideologies. The critical race theorist Philomena Essed has written on the nature of everyday racism in Europe, and how the ideals of tolerance and equality are sometimes distorted due to Eurocentric racism. Not believing in the superiority of your race or ethnic group is twisted into not reminding people different from yourself of their alleged inferiority. Essed (1991) notes the racist condescension toward a Surinamese doctor by her Dutch colleagues when a student presentation had a patient from Suriname as the subject. The presenter, knowing the doctor was also from Suriname, looked at her and said "sorry" while another doctor patted her on the back to comfort her. "Later the colleague confesses that he apologized because he felt it might have been offensive to his Black colleague to be reminded that she is from the same 'inferior background' as the patient" (Essed 1991:167).

Swedes are also known to be guilty of this from time to time—a difficulty in conceiving of difference without thinking in hierarchical terms, in which Swedes are invariably placed at the top (Mark Graham, personal communication). In a 1994 letter to the editor over a debate on whether or not displaying the Swedish flag in front of one's house was offensive to immigrants[58] one woman claimed that it was, on the grounds that it signaled to immigrants "that you are

[57] i.e., someone born in a foreign country but emigrated while they were still a child and were raised in the new country, making them ostensibly more integrated than 1st generation immigrants but less so than 2nd generation immigrants.

[58] Displays of national pride in Sweden are generally viewed with suspicion due to the association with neo-Nazis displaying the Swedish flag and singing the Swedish national anthem at their rallies. The debate concerns the risk of offending immigrants over efforts to "take back" Swedish symbols from the radical right.

Swedish and best" (Löfgren 2000:230). Essed attributes these attitudes to Eurocentrism, where Western civilization is held as the absolute standard by which all other cultures are judged. *Smygrasists*, convinced that being tolerant simply means not offending foreigners, do not speak in terms of race because to do so would impolitely remind others that they are not white, or more specifically, Swedish.

Might this be what Stanislav was picking up on? Were they trying to soften the blow of reminding him of his inferior status as a non-ethnic Swede? Certainly some people may think this way, but recall my own experience with the Chinese immigrant. It seems highly unlikely that a Chinese woman raised in Sweden would feel bad about asking a white American man his ethnicity for fear of reminding him of his "inferior status" in the world. I offer a second interpretation: It is possible that the hesitation to directly ask someone's background is not due to a fear of inadvertently revealing one's views on racial hierarchy, but because of a past experience asking a non-ethnic Swede where they were from. If this non-ethnic Swede were born in Sweden, the question can be taken to imply they are not "really" Swedish rather than a simple misunderstanding and could cause the person to be offended. This would be exacerbated even further if the Swede meant to ask, "What is your ethnicity?" but because asking someone's ethnicity could be interpreted as racist, they opt for a more politically correct—but entirely different—question: "Where are you from?" When the person replies they are from Sweden and the question is repeated, it is not hard to imagine how it might be misconstrued as prejudiced: "I know, but where are you *from*?"

Another difficulty in asking about a person's ethnicity or country of origin concerns the uncertainty of why someone is asking. This was something I encountered from and relating to people of all different backgrounds during my fieldwork. There is a measure of guardedness that

some people exhibit regarding questions about ethnicity due to a belief that noticing that someone looks different means you are prejudiced. Asking someone's background can be seen as an attempt to place people in boxes, to label them, rather than having to form an opinion based on personal interaction. Sara explained to me that when Swedes come to visit an immigrant neighborhood to observe how the youths are involved in the local community, for example, that they often ask where most of the people are from.

> Sara: I always answer, "Most of them are from [here]. *I Sverige*." And they [ask], (in an exasperated tone) "Yeah, but where do they *come* from?" (laughs) And then I say that we don't think that's an interesting question. Because for the youth it's the most interesting that they live here [. . .] But I know you want me to answer how many people are from Iran and . . .

In this case, because she knew the nature of my research, she answered my questions concerning the major national origins of the inhabitants in the suburb. Her statement suggests that had I not been a researcher but just another Swede she would have been much less forthcoming about this information because in her estimation Swedes have a negative interest in different ethnicities and would have used the information she provided to inform where to send their children to school or where to buy a house. Earlier on in the interview I had asked if ethnicity was important or meaningful to her and she conceded that in a certain sense it was.

> Sara: I think it's interesting when people [are] from different countries. And that is the reason why in the beginning why I wanted to work here [. . .] In the good way. (laughs) So I can't say it [has] no meaning because I like the work with, to meet people from

different countries. So, um, in that way it is an issue for me, but I have no problem with it, no.[59]

For her, it is "interesting" to work with and meet people from different countries and that had factored significantly into her career choice in working with immigrants, but when others ask about the demographics of an immigrant suburb, she becomes evasive and claims that it is *not* an "interesting question."

The default assumption among Swedes of all backgrounds seems to be that asking about or noticing ethnic differences implies prejudice rather than mere curiosity. When a new tenant moved into my apartment, my Jordanian flatmate admonished me for noting that he was Kurdish, stating, "It does not matter where he comes from!" In all fairness, a context-free inquiry of ethnic origin would strike me as at the very least peculiar. Before we ever met face to face, one of my Kurdish informants, Tomaj, asked me over the phone what my ethnicity was while we were scheduling where and when to meet for the interview. I must confess a certain measure of cautious puzzlement on my part upon being asked this, and while I never directly asked him why he wanted to know during the course of our interview, I surmise it is because Kevin is coincidentally a male Kurdish name but Turausky is clearly Eastern European. Since it seemed unusual for an American to come to Sweden to study Kurds, he likely assumed I was partially of Kurdish descent as well.

This delicate verbal balancing act so many Swedes—and a few non-ethnic Swedes—engage in when speaking to people who are somehow different from them can often make it difficult to know what someone's meaning and motivations are. *Smygrasism* lurks in everyday

[59] Interview File 090325_01, recorded March 25, 2009.

and official discourses, where the meanings and implications are quite clear to the observant individual, yet because of the language used it is protected from being denounced as racism outright. When these official discourses are implemented, however, they can sometimes result in another, more tangible form of discrimination.

Institutionalized Discrimination

Besides the type of discrimination one encounters face-to-face, there is also institutionalized discrimination, such as in the job market. Swedish companies and employers can often utilize job qualifications as a means to screen out immigrants without having to resort to overtly racist tendencies to pick only Swedish employees. For instance, there are tremendously high language requirements for many jobs that do not require near fluency to perform (Soininen and Graham 1997:38). This is one such tactic to prevent immigrants from entering the workforce. Another strategy is to de-emphasize the merits of a foreign degree, oftentimes not even accepting the degree at all. This can sometimes be prudent, as not all university educations are created equal and a university degree from a developing country might not have adequately prepared its graduates for the standards of employment in the West. Other times it can simply be an unfounded distrust of foreign educational systems, as in the case of a British man I met in Stockholm. He told me that during a job interview his current employer immediately told him his university degree might not be accepted before actually reading his *Curriculum Vitae* and seeing he graduated from the University of Cambridge.

The skepticism over a non-Swedish education can frequently lead to employment decisions where a person with a foreign degree ends up with a job that she is overqualified for because only extremely high qualifications are seen as satisfactory proof that a foreigner is

competent. An immigrant's résumé will have to so clearly outshine the résumés of Swedish applicants that the normal justifications for choosing a Swede over a foreigner will not apply. Grace saw this problem happening to those around her and experienced it herself.

"You know for migrants to get the same job as a Swede they have to be better than a Swede." She said, "So it's quite ridiculous, you know? So if I'm going to apply for same job I have to always have *much* better qualifications, even though we are going to work in the same field."

"Oh, is that what you said you're—you feel you're overqualified for this job?" I asked, recalling something she said earlier in the interview.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is always like that, it has always been like that. So it's quite sad but it's, this is the way it is."[60]

Obtaining degrees from Swedish institutions helps remedy this to an extent, as this not only demonstrates a migrant is competent in the Swedish system familiar to employers but also implicitly signals language competence, a trait that can be focused on almost obsessively.[61] However, the danger also exists for a foreigner to be too overqualified to hire (Graham and Soininen 1997). The reason for avoiding such an applicant would not be much different than the reason for avoiding hiring an overqualified native-born citizen: if a person's qualifications are too high for the job, he is likely only going to want to work there for a short period of time, perhaps until he finds a job more suited to his abilities. Such an employee would be seen as a poor hiring choice when faced with other applicants more properly suited for the position. All of

[60] Interview File 090526_01, recorded on May 26, 2009.
[61] Rosina Lippi-Green has observed this phenomenon in the United States, "Accent discrimination can be found everywhere in our daily lives. In fact, such behavior is so commonly accepted, so widely perceived as appropriate, that it must be seen as the last back door to discrimination. And the door is wide open." (1997:73)

these factors combine to make a rather hostile job market for immigrants; they have to be more qualified than their Swedish counterparts in order to obtain a desirable job, but not so overqualified that they seem a poor investment.

Certain legislative acts passed in Sweden meant ostensibly to protect immigrants and minority populations from discrimination, it has been suggested, actually encourage discrimination. In these instances, it is not quite *smygrasism* as there need not be any prejudice involved, the well-meaning law simply happens to work against those not in the dominant culture. This would be similar to the aforementioned scenario of white Americans choosing to live in an affluent all-white neighborhood for purely economic motivations rather than any sense of prejudice against people of color, but the effects still reproduce segregation, regardless of intent (Hill 2008:26) An example would be Sweden's Law on Employment Security, which makes firing an employee much more difficult and, supposedly, make immigrants less susceptible to the whims of bigoted employers who might dismiss them in times of hardship sooner than Swedish employees. In effect, though, it made employers much more cautious and less willing to take a risk hiring a foreigner whose competence and work ethic are unknown. As a result, companies are more likely to employ a Swede coming from a more familiar background, even if they might be less capable than other candidates (Soininen and Graham 1995:19).

In 1994 the "Law Against Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life" was passed and, as its name implies, was meant to curb negative treatment of immigrants in the workplace. The law had some problems in affecting its title goal, one of which had to do with the clause protecting against "cases of ethnic discrimination in working life which are directly offensive to public conceptions of justice, and where the element of discrimination plays an obvious part" (Soininen and Graham 1995:20). This could be interpreted as encouraging discrimination as long as it is

not “obvious” (Soininen and Graham 1997:5). In this instance, the law would encourage conscious *smygrasism*, essentially saying, “Discrimination is OK, as long as you don’t get caught.”

Another aspect of institutionalized discrimination occurs among those who do not have jobs. The civil servants who work in Sweden’s welfare offices and immigration bureaus deal with non-ethnic Swedes who have fallen upon difficult times. In welfare and employment offices, people who are unable to find a job seek aid in finding work as well as welfare checks. The immigration offices decide whether the appeals for refugee status are to be granted or rejected, and concerns that the dire situations an applicant claims to be in are untrue begin to rise. The people working in these offices begin to believe that many of the non-ethnic Swedes seeking their aid are frauds, attempting to enter the country simply to live off welfare indefinitely. Grace, for instance, felt that the Swedish civil servants were too cynical and suspicious of the claims made by immigrants and refugees about their economic situations. She felt that many of these Swedes automatically assumed the immigrants were attempting to get extra money by filling out paperwork that made it seem they were needier than they actually were. According to her, the civil servants would grow to act as though the money that they were responsible for allocating to immigrants was their own personal savings and as a result felt that unless the person was abjectly in need of economic assistance then they were taking “their” money. However, this view of cynical and distrusting Swedish civil servants actually contradicts the observations made by Mark Graham (2003).

Graham interviewed a social worker at an employment office who was of Latin-American background. According to Graham’s informant, Swedes were too trusting and erred on the side of caution when the veracity of an immigrant or refugee’s story of need was in question

rather than potentially denying asylum to people who only intended to live off welfare. What was implied was that Swedes were atoning for the guilt they collectively felt for helping Nazis in WWII (Graham 2003:212).[62] Graham's findings and Grace's opinions both suggest that people cannot or should not work in jobs requiring daily interaction with needy immigrants for too long.

Lunch Room Racism

Based upon the reports of many of the people I interviewed, the workplace is a fine example of a locus where *smygrasism* can be found rather easily. These displays can sometimes be so overt that one informant quipped it should not even be called *smygrasism* on account of how poorly hidden it is. Tomaj, a Kurdish man in his fifties, related to me a situation where his subordinates were demonstrating bigoted behavior but did not acknowledge it as such.

"At my job they have printed out a joke from the computer. During the break in the cafeteria . . . I look at it and it says something about niggers (*negrer*) . . . And I ask, 'Who printed this?'" He then quoted the employee, "'Oh that, ha ha, it's very funny.' Then I ask again, 'Who printed this? This is racism. How can you print out 'nigger' (*neger*)? That kind of language is not [allowed] at my company!' And the other Swedes [say], 'Oh, oh! That's bad!' And I say, 'But you said it was funny!' There wasn't anyone who protested it. They all thought it was funny *before* I said it was racist . . . Then they say, 'We didn't know!'"

"OK, so they don't recognize it when they say it?" I asked.

[62] Specifically, while Norway and Denmark were occupied by Germany, Sweden remained militarily neutral throughout the war. Sweden did provide iron ore and materiel to the Nazis as well as grant them passage through their territory. While the Swedish government doubted Britain's ability to protect them after the defeat of France, had Sweden refused to supply Germany with iron their war machine would have been greatly crippled.

"They say that, but I think they recognize before too."[63]

Several people gave similar stories of what I have termed "lunch room racism," a situation where the Jante Law and *smygrasism* interact with one another. Anders, a self-employed Swedish man in his mid-fifties, believed that situations like Tomaj described were the result of perhaps a single individual making a racist statement and his Swedish coworkers, not wanting to enter into a debate with him, will simply agree and try to change the subject if possible.

I wanted to be sure I understood the dynamic of the Swedes' conversations in *lunchrummet* correctly; I asked Anders, "Do they actually hate the immigrants?"

"No, I don't think they do."Anders said, "I just think the easy way to be friends in a room like that is to talk like the others and be like the others. They don't want to, they don't have the strength to be themselves."[64]

Here one can see the Jante Law in effect as confronting the bigot immediately draws attention to oneself and also implies moral superiority over the other person ("Do not think that *you* are superior to *us*") by claiming his opinion is wrong. By this logic, had the topic of the benefits of increased immigration been brought up, the bigots would have agreed in a similar fashion.

Recall Sandemose's criticism of the Jante townspeople's desire for neutrality rather than voicing a dissenting opinion. Rather than have a debate or argument, it is far more common to either agree with the (apparent) majority or try to change the subject to something less sensitive. I have personally seen this take place numerous times in Sweden pertaining to various subjects. The clearest instance of this also involved *smygrasism*: an acquaintance had told me that he was

[63] Interview File 090521_01, recorded May 21, 2009.
[64] Interview File 090422_02, recorded April 22, 2009.

happy that there were so many people who wanted to be Swedish citizens but that these "new Swedes" were definitely not "real" Swedes. At other times I had heard him use ethnic slurs and tell me how Turks were stealing money by living off welfare. Yet on a separate occasion I had told him how much I enjoy working with Kurds (many of whom are from Turkey) and he told me how he laments that more Swedes do not see them as a wonderful people but avoid them like they do any other immigrant. The logic behind this non-confrontational attitude toward racism in the workplace seems to be that the people who hold prejudiced opinions are no more likely to be swayed by an argument denouncing racism than a non-prejudiced person is to be swayed by the remarks made by a bigot and thus there is nothing to be gained by confronting them. It may only serve to add tension and conflict to the workplace and, given the aforementioned difficulty in dismissing employees, very little positive change would result from it.

Additionally, in an all-Swedish workplace there would be little risk of losing face by quickly going along with a coworker's prejudiced statements because the other Swedes would be aware of the social dynamics at play. It is only when a non-Swede is present that this system fails. Thus while Tomaj's story poignantly illustrates how *smygrasism* operates on the conscious level, it is entirely possible that some of the employees laughed at the joke just to humor the one who printed it out and are not bigots themselves. The all-Swedish lunchroom might be considered a "private" context where "light talk" (Hill 2008) and joking is allowed because in such contexts things are not to be taken seriously. Because it is not a "serious" public declaration, people are allowed to say things and not be held to them. But this only works if everyone is implicitly in agreement on such an arrangement, which Tomaj clearly was not. Once he confronted them, they would be in the difficult position of trying to prove that they are not racists despite having not denounced—and even having laughed at—a clearly racist joke. In such

a scenario, it might also be difficult for a Swede to explain that she only went along with the joke because Swedish society discourages standing out from the crowd, even if tolerance is congruent to Swedish values.

In effect, the glimpse into lunchroom racism that Tomaj witnessed is the same as Malin's example of *smygrasist* politicians saying overtly racist things in what was supposed to be a private context. Though Tomaj's coworkers were not as audacious as the politicians in that they did not outright deny ever telling a racist joke, they did claim that they did not know using slurs counted as racist. While covert racism exists in countries that do not have the Jante Law—as amply demonstrated by the United States—the presence of it in Sweden means that challenging or resisting it can be much more difficult. If no one is better than anyone else, then if someone is "caught" being racist it would be best to dismiss it rather than confront them and implicitly declare your moral superiority. Because *smygrasism* includes discourse that is deliberately hiding racism from the public as well as unknowingly racist utterances, and Swedes generally are nonconfrontational about such things, it can be extraordinarily difficult to determine whether they believe what they are saying or simply insincerely concurring with what was said.

CHAPTER 5

FAR FROM *LAGOM*

"You hate Turks in Sweden but you love them in Turkey! If you hate them so much why do you go there on vacation?"-Grace[65]

South of Stockholm is a town called Tumba. It is a pleasant suburban area connected to the city by a commuter train. Many of the people who live here are not originally from Sweden, but moved here as either labor migrants or refugees. Tumba is not special in this regard; it is part of a ring of towns and neighborhoods that radiate out from the main city. Botkyrka is the name of the borough, and its neighborhoods range from charming and peaceful, like Tumba, to the dangerous and dreary suburbs in the north. If you are coming from downtown, the first thing you will see of Botkyrka will be the latter type of residences—a terrible first impression and a formidable barrier to exploring further. If you avoid the subway and take the train instead, you can bypass the seedier locales and go straight to the cleaner and more wholesome areas of southern Botkyrka.

The majority of Botkyrka's inhabitants are first or second generation immigrants from all over the world, with many coming from the Middle East, Finland, Chile and Greece. The municipality has embraced this fact in its motto: "Far from *lagom*" (*Långt ifrån lagom*). *Lagom* (pronounced LAH-gome)[66] is a Swedish word often translated as "enough," "just right" or "moderation." More properly, it refers to the idea that for everything there is a perfect quantity or quality, any more or less of which is not desirable. For those unfamiliar with the concept, it is perhaps easiest to see the opposite of *lagom*: imbalance, disproportion, insufficiency or excess. A

[65] Interview File 090526_01, recorded on May 26, 2009.
[66] IPA: /ˈlɑ̀ːgɔm/

person can be *lagom* tall and it is even possible to beat someone up *lagom*. The common expression "*Lagom* is best" succinctly signifies the importance of this concept in Swedish society. Many Swedes seem to take a small measure of pride in the fact that *lagom* cannot be directly translated and it is one of the few concepts that can generally be agreed upon as distinctly Swedish.

For those who were not raised with the concept of *lagom*, however, it is often misinterpreted as meaning "average," and can be seen as a bad thing: no extravagance or excitement, just a boring, tepid philosophy too concerned with being as inoffensive as possible. This, combined with the strong Swedish cultural association with the concept, inspired the motto for Botkyrka; it implicitly declares that the municipality and its inhabitants are far from the Swedish state of mind and livelier as a result. By being far from *lagom*, they are proudly eschewing the traditional (or perhaps stereotypical) Swedish way of life. Thus, from a non-Swedish perspective, being far from *lagom* means being exciting and vivacious—but from a Swedish point of view, it means Botkyrka is imbalanced and has far too much or far too little of something. And it would not be too hard to imagine certain Swedes agreeing that there are "far too many" immigrants in that region.

An Unseen Barrier

One Kurdish man who volunteered to be interviewed hailed from Tumba and invited me to his home to talk over tea. Tomaj, a man in his early fifties with only a hint of grey in his black hair, met me at the train station and drove me back to his house. His neighborhood, despite being populated by non-Swedes, was surprisingly Swedish in appearance. The design of the houses, the gardens, the yards, all of it was indistinguishable from a Swedish neighborhood. The only thing

that seemed unusual was the distance between the houses: spacious grass lawns surrounded each narrow, two-story, sloped roof home, which increased the space between each home and gave the neighborhood a feeling of a crowd of people each trying to give as much personal space to the other as possible.

A few houses down from Tomaj's home, we stopped briefly in the road as a small boy on a tricycle was playing in the street. He quickly pedaled to the side as he waved to Tomaj and we continued on. After pulling into the driveway, Tomaj stepped out of the car and greeted his neighbor who was mowing the lawn. The scene reminded me more of a movie scene in suburban Americana than any image normally conjured up by the phrase "immigrant neighborhood." Despite the municipal motto, in Tomaj's neighborhood at least, the people are not as different from Swedish sensibilities as one would be led to believe.

Stepping inside, we took off our shoes at the door and Tomaj gestured for me to have a seat on the leather couch in the parlor while he entered the kitchen to prepare our tea. While we waited for the water to boil, he returned to the parlor and sat down in a recliner opposite me. I complimented him on his fine home; he told me that he had it built out here in Tumba because he was unable to find a decent house or apartment within Stockholm due to Swedes being reluctant to have an immigrant live in their neighborhood. It truly was a lovely home, with wooden floors and Persian rugs, IKEA shelves with Kurdish knick-knacks. When he returned to the kitchen to prepare the tea, I took the opportunity to study the décor in greater detail. On a bookshelf there was a black stone slab twice the size of my hand with red Soraní[67] script, resembling an abridged Rosetta Stone. Decidedly Western designs decorated with Iranian artwork.

[67]The writing may have been in Arabic or Persian; I assume it is Soraní simply because Tomaj is very proud of his Kurdish heritage.

It was clear that Tomaj was better off than most immigrants, at least most non-Europeans. As we sat down for tea he explained that he was a supervisor at a large Swedish corporation, the only non-Swede in such a position out of perhaps two dozen others in similar posts. Despite his success in Sweden, which as a political refugee he could never have achieved in Iran, Tomaj was rather cynical about day-to-day life in Sweden. Specifically, he was upset about how coworkers seemed to regard him.

"Some accept me OK." he said in Swedish, "They can't imagine that an *immigrant* who can't speak Swedish that well can be a boss here in Sweden. Some, say three or four. But the rest are rather hesitant. 'What are you doing here? You should be working on the floor. In manufacturing.' 'You should be baking pizza, you should be driving a taxi.' They don't say it in words, you read it in their eyes. When you introduce yourself, 'Hi, my name is Tomaj.'" He acts out their reaction, tilting his head back suspiciously and raising his eyebrows, "Uh-huh. Uh-huh!" Tomaj gave a short laugh and then said in English, "Surprise. Big surprise."

"Do you enjoy living in Stockholm?" I asked.

"I don't like to live in *Sweden* as a whole."

"You, you don't?" I was rather thrown by his response, given how well he seemed to have done for himself.

"Not just Stockholm. All of Sweden. I don't like it." He continued.

"Huh. Why?"

"It's cold, it's dark. Dark."

I gave a short laugh since everyone I spoke to had something to say about Sweden's weather. "Yeah."

"I don't like it. One. Two, culture. You'll *never* be accepted as a part of the society. Never, ever. There's a red line between me and other Swedes. *Ethnic* Swedes."

"Ah."

"I have lived here seventeen years and when we go to parties, film festivals they [the Swedes] ask, 'What are you eating, Tomaj? Do you eat pork? Aren't you a Muslim?' I'm thinking, 'I've lived here seventeen years. I don't believe in God, I'm an atheist.'"

"Hmm." I said while masking my slight amusement at the fact that the way he phrased his sentence might suggest it was his time in Sweden which led him to believe there is no God. However, I am almost certain he did not mean to link the two.

Tomaj continued, "Always, always there's an unseen, invisible," holding his forearm in front of his chest, moving it up and down to signify a wall or barrier. "Between me and them. Always. They don't say it, but there is. When they speak about '*We* Swedes.' I live here, I work here, I pay taxes" He repeated 'pay taxes' again in English for emphasis. "Always. And always '*We* Swedes. *You* who have come here.' Why don't I like living here? First, the climate, cold and dark. Then the culture, acceptance, you'll never be accepted."

"So it's not exactly culture. If they had the same culture but if they accepted you, said, 'Yeah, welcome!' Would that be better or is there something more?" I asked.

"It would be better, but it would take a long time. A very long time. If you look at the social structure, there's a . . . structural discrimination, structural racism. That when you look at the number of police . . ."

"Hmm?"

"Among 100 police there are just *one* and a half who are of [an] immigrant background." I nodded, reflecting on my own observations around Stockholm.

"Ordinary police. Among security forces, there are none. I've never seen any. Among the authorities, the important posts there are none with immigrant background. If you compare Sweden with the U.S., or . . . There aren't so many people who have immigrant background."[68]

This was one of several observations of this structural discrimination Tomaj had mentioned, something he encouraged me to observe for myself. If he was counting based on his own observations and not quoting some statistic it would be very easy to arrive at this conclusion. While "immigrant" in traditional Swedish parlance means someone who does not look Swedish, as opposed to Finns or Germans, it would be incorrect to only count non-Europeans as immigrants. In point of fact, nearly half of all people of foreign descent in Sweden come from Europe or other Western countries.[69] Looking around for myself, I did indeed see the vast majority of police were white, but I would not be certain enough to say whether they were all Swedish or if Yugoslavs, Poles or Finns were among their ranks.[70] The question of who is a

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[68] Interview File 090521_01, recorded May 21, 2009.

[69] I obtained this figure using data from the Swedish Statistics Bureau (*Statistiska centralbyrån*) listing the number of foreign born persons in Sweden in 2009, then subtracting the figures from Europe and countries with populations that are mostly white and/or Caucasian. While I acknowledge this method is somewhat spurious, it provides a rough estimate of people who are capable of blending in as Swedes.

[70] Simply because these groups are less conspicuously non-Swedish than people from the Middle East does not mean they do not experience discrimination. People from the Balkans or Eastern Europe are often stereotyped as

Swede and who is an immigrant is at the very heart of contemporary Swedish society. As Tomaj claims, the Swedes will never accept people who clearly do not look Swedish as their own; a sentiment that, unfortunately, is shared by most non-European immigrants.

Nahid, a Kurdish woman from Iraq and mother of two sons, had a similar outlook. Nahid, however, lived in a suburb called Märsta, as far north from Stockholm City as Tumba is south. Now in her early forties, she fled Iraq in 1986 during the Iran-Iraq War, the same war in which Saddam Hussein gassed Kurdish villages. She too had volunteered to be interviewed, having heard from the Kurdistan Regional Government's Nordic Representative's listserv that I was interested in talking to Kurds about their experiences living in Sweden. We had previously only corresponded by email, so when I met her in person for the first time, I was rather surprised. She was fair-skinned, with brown hair and green eyes; had I tried to guess her origin based purely on appearance I would certainly not have guessed the Middle East.

We met at a downtown subway station and proceeded to walk down the street looking for a sufficiently quiet café to conduct the interview. Once we found one that was just emptying out from the lunch rush, we were able to start the recorded interview and jump directly into the questions, the customary small talk having occurred during our search for a place to sit. Nahid explained to me that she felt in Sweden people would always treat her as an outsider, but this attitude was not shared by her sons. When her family traveled back to Kurdistan to visit, she found that they did not consider it their homeland as she does.

"My boys were born in Sweden; they feel Swedish, both of them." Nahid said, "When we go to—we have been to Kurdistan twice with them. They are really sad, and when I talk to them,

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being mobsters, smugglers or alcoholics, and employment discrimination is often by name. This means that if someone believes these prejudices and they see "Hafizovic," "Kowalski" or "Hakkarainen" on a job application they may not consider them regardless of their appearance.

'What is it about you?' They, they say they do not—'I miss my country.' They believe that Sweden is their country, and that's wrong. It's wrong because they won't be treated like a Swede. It's, it's just—I have told them, 'You must accept that you are foreigners. You were born here, but you are foreigners, you are of foreign background, your parents are foreign.' [. . .]They think—they *believe* Sweden is their country because they were born here, but it isn't so."[71]

For Nahid, it is not enough that one be born and raised in Sweden and considers oneself Swedish; one must be accepted and treated as such in order to truly be a Swede. While it is easy to understand where she is coming from, I found myself wondering how such an outlook would help her sons. If both second-generation immigrants and xenophobic Swedes were to have the same opinion—that citizenship and being a member of society do not make one a real Swede—then why would anything change? This is what Camara Phyllis Jones calls internalized racism, which "involves accepting limitations to one's own full humanity, including one's spectrum of dreams, one's right to self-determination, and one's range of allowable self-expression" (2000:1213). As saddened as she is by this prospect, Nahid appears to want her sons to accept their status as "foreigners" with all of the implied limitations such a label brings in Sweden.

Swedishness

One of the biggest obstacles to integration and acceptance of immigrants in Sweden is addressing what being Swedish even means. From my observations, there are at least three different ways to qualify: ethnically, nationally or culturally. Ethnic Swedishness means one is part of the majority population that is native to the territory Sweden now possesses.[72] Swedish

[71] Interview File 090605_01, recorded June 6, 2009.
[72] This does not include the Saami in the north—whose presence in Scandinavia predates that of the ethnic Swedes—Tornedalians, Swedish Finns, Jews or Romani, all of whom are recognized minorities by the Swedish government.

nationality is simply having Swedish citizenship, regardless of whether one was born with it or naturalized. Cultural Swedishness is the most difficult and abstract signifier for the Swedish identity, though it is arguably the most important. While the term suggests a homogeneous group, any Swede would recognize temperance-advocating Laestadian Christians, materialistic upper-class Stockholmers and working-class Swedish greasers (*raggare*) all as culturally Swedish. In addition to such subcultures, cultural Swedishness might be a collection of shared experiences, beliefs and understandings that overlap with everyone in Swedish society. To what extent such core commonalities exist is beside the point; most people believe that there is something that makes "Swedish culture" distinct from other cultures.

The fact that there are three different ways of counting as Swedish leads to a degree of ambiguity when it comes to designating who is and is not Swedish. For instance, my friend Tess is part Finnish but was uncertain how to define herself. When we went out for beer, our first reunion in six years, she explained her heritage to me. Because her maternal grandparents emigrated from Finland and her mother was born and raised in Sweden, Tess expressed confusion as to whether she was half Finnish by ethnicity or one quarter Finnish by culture. Despite this, she firmly believed in citizenship as the absolute criterion—you either are a citizen or you are not.

"Like being Swedish on paper should be if you should really draw the line, a very strict line. But then it's also a little bit up to yourself, right?" Tess said. "Like for example, I would say that I am Swedish, but actually I'm 50 percent," she laughed, "Or 25 percent Finnish, but I would never say that. No, I would say that I am Swedish if someone asked me."

I then remembered her Canadian boyfriend Tom was considering one day becoming a Swedish citizen, and asked, "Well then when Tom gets his passport does that mean he's just magically automatically Swedish just because he—"

"No, no." Tess interrupted, "But on paper I guess he is. But no. Of course, speaking the language I guess is one thing because that makes you be involved in everything. Like you can follow the news on TV about Sweden and talk to Swedish people and things like that. So I guess knowing the language, at least speak it, is also something that makes you Swedish but it's not like you have to eat meatballs and lingonberries to be Swedish. That's not how far I will define [it]."[73]

None of the people I spoke to would disagree that in an official, legal sense, Swedishness was merely citizenship and thus no one could be more Swedish than anyone else. In terms of everyday practice and experience, however, not nearly as many people believed that this was all there was to being Swedish. During my fieldwork, it occurred to me that because Swedes have historically been culturally, nationally and ethnically Swedish, and that they forced assimilation upon groups that were not, the elusive element that makes someone "truly" Swedish may be that they are all three. Among the people I interviewed, there were some who were unclear what the difference was between culture, nationality and ethnicity, believing two of the three terms to be synonymous.

I sat down to talk with Malin in a bustling little coffee shop in Bredäng, a neighborhood halfway between downtown Stockholm and the immigrant suburb I lived in. The location seemed appropriate for the nature of my interview, and over the chatter of other patrons I learned

[73] Interview Files 090331_01 and 090331_02, recorded March 31, 2009.

a great deal about how Swedishness is imagined. For example, Malin initially felt that culture and nationality were practically the same things; and I then explained how an immigrant living in a highly segregated neighborhood, isolated from mainstream Swedish society, could be a Swedish citizen but have no real connection to Swedish culture. She accepted this distinction but asserted that nationality would still be the primary identifier. Later on, I asked if the Saami are considered Swedish because they are citizens.

"They're *svensk medborgare* (Swedish citizens) but they are—"

"But they are Saami," Malin said. She turned her head ever so slightly to the side, narrowed her eyes and continued with a smile. "And that's interesting. I've been working and living in Luleå, in the northern part of Sweden, for three years and I was actually trying to understand."

She explained a little of the sordid history between the Swedish state and the Saami people: how Swedes might criticize the United States for its treatment of the Native Americans but ignore how Sweden took Saami land and actively tried to wipe out Saami language and culture. Given that context, I returned to my question of national versus cultural identification. "Would the Saami consider themselves Swedish?"

"Well, Saami are Swedish, yes. They do, they do. But the stronger nationality, the stronger culture is the Saami. There is no doubt about it." Malin decided.[74][75]

[74] Interview File 090422_01, recorded April 22, 2009.
[75] The Saami in Norway, Sweden and Finland each have their own semi-autonomous parliaments through which they exercise limited self-government within the borders of their respective nation-states. (Sápmi 2010) Though the three parliaments work together, there is no unified Saami government, nor has Russia recognized the Saami as a minority group and hence not granted them a parliament.

This idea of a "stronger nationality" might explain the confusion and resistance that Swedes have to non-ethnic Swedes identifying themselves as Swedish. It is assumed that people who are not Swedish by blood are supposed to have a permanent link to wherever their ancestors came from. If people who gain Swedish citizenship then start calling themselves Swedish, more traditionally-minded people may object, perceiving a false claim to ethnic and/or cultural Swedishness when no such claim is being made.

Vicious Cycles

Being raised in a neighborhood with very few Swedes—far away from the rest of mainstream Swedish society—can have deleterious effects on a person's ability to successfully navigate the job market. Some of the prejudices that led to such segregation in the first place are also certain to obstruct a non-ethnic Swede's path. However, to accept these obstacles as insurmountable creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that not only reinforces stereotypes of non-ethnic Swedes as hostile to Swedish culture and, conversely, of all Swedes as bigots. Fryshuset, an urban youth organization in Stockholm, is dedicated to combating racism and intolerance and recognizes that in some instances immigrants can indeed harm themselves with self-defeating attitudes. Two members of Fryshuset's *Lugna Gatan* (Easy Street) program, a crime prevention and youth mediation project, sat down with me to discuss their views on immigrant integration. Azra, a woman in her late twenties of Serbian descent who was born outside Gothenburg, and Margarita, a woman in her early thirties of Chilean descent who was born in an immigrant suburb of Stockholm, related to me the difficulties facing immigrant youths. I interviewed both of them at the same time and they clearly worked well together, often finishing each other's sentences and answering in tandem; whenever one was having difficulty conveying her message, the other would jump in and clarify.

When Azra moved to Stockholm, she took up residence in Rinkeby, the same ethnic enclave[76] where Margarita was born. Rinkeby is infamous throughout Sweden as a shady and dangerous place, and not incidentally for its high number of non-ethnic Swedes. Even though it does not deserve its unfortunate reputation, it is not difficult to imagine why many Swedes are apprehensive about the neighborhood; aside from the Swedish street signs and the occasional snow, it does not look or feel like anywhere else in Sweden. The shops are usually either Turkish- or Arabic-owned, with Turkish game shows playing in kebab restaurants and signs in Swedish reading "Saïd's *halal* butchery" with Arabic script underneath. The Africans chatting on the benches, the Arabic shops selling a variety of head scarves, the woman in a black *niqab* pushing a stroller past row after row of insipid yellow apartment blocks, none of it bears any resemblance to the more traditionally designed or affluent suburbs closer to downtown Stockholm. Walking about in Rinkeby, I do not feel this is a particularly treacherous or scary place, though it certainly is dreary in its design and very unlike a middle-class Swedish neighborhood. Rinkeby was built in the 1970s as part of the "Million Program" designed to create one million affordable new homes in Sweden. The plan chose function over form, and as a result the buildings have been compared to architecture in the Soviet bloc.

Rinkeby is very much a deviation from the Sweden that most people imagine. Neither quaint suburbia nor cosmopolitan urbanity—it is much further from *lagom* than Tumba. This, more than any actual danger, may be part of the unease Swedes often have toward Rinkeby. The mere mention of its name to potential employers hampers job opportunities, and the neighborhood's unwholesome reputation keeps many Swedes from moving in. Though both

[76] Neighborhoods like Rinkeby have populations that are upwards of 70 percent immigrants and non-ethnic Swedes. Though this is the result of unofficial residential segregation on the part of Swedes, many immigrants choose to take up residence in these neighborhoods to have a modicum of familiarity during their transition to life in a new country.

Azra and Margarita have experienced their share of discrimination—sometimes as a direct result of their place of residence—they caution that accepting discrimination in the labor market as an immutable fact can lead to greater problems.

> Azra: Many [immigrants] have an excuse, "No, I can't get a job because I have black hair and brown eyes." I don't deal with that. But that's the first thing they're up against. That's the wall. You come and look for a job at Fryshuset, for example. [. . .] I have had the feeling myself. I have just come out of the suburbs, I live in a segregated neighborhood, I've only heard that Swedes are shit and I'll try to get into in this society; I hindered myself, for once I arrived, I was already thinking I will not get the job. "I will not get the job because I am foreign; I am foreign, I'm foreign, I cannot work." So once I get there I have a rotten attitude myself, and then they [the job interviewers] just [say], "[You'll] hear from us." And no one will call. Then I will have it as an excuse even though I maybe responded incorrectly to the questions; if they ask me, "What are you doing in five years?" [and I answer] "I don't know." So they [immigrants] have themselves looked foolish, although they blame it on society. (switches to English) On [. . .] everybody else. "It's not my fault I didn't get a job. I did my best and they only, only saw my black hair and my brown eyes." [. . .] *Men egentligen* [but actually] I answered the wrong things. They asked me what I would do in five years, *i fem år*, and I [said], "I don't know, maybe . . ." Insecure. And they [the job interviewers] saw she or he [immigrants] are not ready for themselves. [. . .] And that's my own problem, it's my

> fault that I don't know what I want to do in five years. And then I blame racists. "They don't want me because I have black hair."[77]

Margarita then chimed in to clarify that although the residential segregation and the placement of refugee families is racially motivated, it is not necessarily the case that the employers are themselves similarly prejudiced.

> Margarita: It's because of the segregation there are, you're living in a *förrot* [suburb] and you only hear bad things about the Swedish people. Like Sweedies. You call them Sweedies. (switches to Swedish) And . . . they form a picture. Swedes and those Swedes. [. . .] "They think they're better than us, they're something else." And "What are those Swedes doing? They're not going to hire me!" So they [immigrants] go to an interview and see the Swedes and [crosses her arms and slumps in her chair] "Well I'm not getting *this* job!" (switches to English) So they [the job interviewers] see that. That's why you didn't get the job . . . [78]

Azra and Margarita, both olive-skinned, second-generation immigrant women who grew up in segregated neighborhoods, have certainly seen the ugly side of Sweden. Yet they both recognize that as bad as the structural discrimination might be, for non-ethnic Swedes to believe there is no point in trying to get ahead in society is a worse-than-useless attitude. Even a non-prejudiced person will be less likely to hire someone (immigrant or otherwise) who has already convinced himself he is not going to get the job. This outlook is at least partly informed by Fryshuset's mission, which is "based on the belief that humanity and justice can be reached through commitment, encouragement, self-esteem and enthusiasm transferred between people

[77] Interview File 090408_01, recorded April 8, 2009.
[78] Interview File 090408_01, recorded April 8, 2009.

and generations" (Fryshuset 2010), as well as its programs to increase the desirability of youths in the workforce. Combating internalized racism is an integral part of combating institutionalized and personally mediated racism as well.

A New Understanding

I ended up in Tumba once more to talk with Sven, a member of the nationalist party, the Sweden Democrats. After an email exchange wherein he requested proof I was indeed an anthropologist and not a troublemaker sent by a rival party, he agreed to an interview over beers on a Tuesday afternoon. It was a lovely spring day best spent outdoors, so we sat out on the patio of a pub and talked. I did find it peculiar that, after over three dozen interviews with people of various ages and backgrounds, he was the only one who suggested meeting in a bar.[79] I was very interested in what Sven had to say, since no other person I had spoken to who mentioned the Sweden Democrats thought fondly of them. The consensus was that the group was at best xenophobic and at worst racist—yet none had ever spoken to a Sweden Democrat personally. Sven, ever the politician, tactfully explained some of the problems associated with Sweden's overly generous refugee policy and the effects of immigration, and not once made an overtly racist remark.

"So what are some of the prejudices that people have about foreigners?" I asked, "Does everyone just lump immigrants together . . . ?"

[79] I recalled something that Tomaj, whose house was a scant fifteen minutes away, had mentioned to me: Swedes only drink alcohol on weekend evenings, and anyone drinking during the weekday—in the afternoon, no less!—would be thought of as an alcoholic. Tomaj allowed that this attitude is changing a little because of trips to other countries where a glass of wine during the week is perfectly acceptable, but maintained that Swedes still only drink on weekends. I wondered if Sven had embraced this un-Swedish custom, or if perhaps Tomaj did not know "the Swedes" quite as well as he thought.

"No, no, no. I don't think people have anything against *invandrare* (immigrants), foreigners." Sven replied.

"Really!?" I asked, genuinely surprised to hear that he did not even allow the "occasional bad apple" qualifier.

"I don't think so. I think it's the politic people don't like. It's the politic, you know, immigration politic. It's like school politic, defense politic, everything. They don't agree with that politic."

"OK."

"It's not a good integration politic. That has nothing to do with, you know, the people who want to immigrate. Nothing," he assured me.[80]

Sven explained that the Sweden Democrats' reputation as racists and xenophobes was a product of political slander on behalf of other parties that did not want to lose voters to them. When I asked what he saw as some of the advantages of his party's proposed immigration policy, he said that it would result in less unemployment and more places to live. In other words, the Sweden Democrats are not against immigrants; they are against the process that brings immigrants, which they feel is responsible for the job and housing shortages.

Even while switching between English and Swedish, Sven had a way with words. There were times where what he was saying did not sound so extreme until I read through the transcript and his full implications became clear.[81] No overtly racist stances can be made without making it

[80] Interview File 090623_01, recorded June 23, 2009.
[81] In fairness, however, when I asked what the Sweden Democrats thought was an acceptable rate of immigration he balked when I suggested a rate comparable to Finland. Sven wanted a much lower rate of immigration for Sweden, but Finland's granting only 3,400 people citizenship in 2009 (Statistics Finland 2010) was far too low.

impossible for more than a handful of voters to support the Sweden Democrats; Swedes, like most Westerners, understand that direct complaint or hostility toward other ethnic groups is now seen as racist and morally wrong. Even more so than other countries, I feel Sweden regards itself as a tolerant and understanding country where racism is something only a few misguided radicals, like perhaps the Sweden Democrats, practice. Of course, the reality is not so idyllic, and even when a person's opinions and actions are clearly signs of prejudiced thought, many Swedes will not admit it even to themselves. Some of this is due to the fact that most Swedes live in smaller towns and villages where very few (or no) non-ethnic Swedes live; it might be very easy to fancy yourself tolerant if the most exotic person you have ever met is from Stockholm.

This fact became particularly salient for me very near the end of my fieldwork when I went up to a small town called Rättvik to celebrate Midsummer. Midsummer is easily considered the most Swedish holiday, small towns more Swedish than big cities, and the county (Dalarna) is considered to be iconically Swedish as well, so this was to be the archetypical Swedish Midsummer. I traveled with some Swedish friends from my year studying at Uppsala, one of whose parents owned a summer home in Rättvik, where we ended up staying. This was the same trip I mentioned earlier where my friend's mother disapproved of their neighbor's new purchase. Our friend's mother remarked that in all their years of celebrating Midsummer there, they had never had a *foreigner* over before. I thought that was slightly odd but did not think much of it until later, at the dinner table, when I realized that out of nine people, I was the only one with brown eyes (though some had brown hair). It had not simply been that I was American—I *looked* foreign. Having noted the dominant eye color at the dinner table, when it came time to walk into town to watch the Midsummer festivities I found that people with brown eyes, including the non-European tourists, were still distinctly in the minority—comprising perhaps ten percent of the

entire crowd. Still white, still American, I was "safe"—but how would people who look even more foreign than me be treated if they were not just tourists, but moved in next door?

It can be quite difficult for people to recognize their own xenophobic or prejudiced opinions, and the longer one's worldview remains unchallenged, the harder it can be to change it. Fortunately, there are Swedes who have the self-awareness needed to accomplish this. While I was talking with Malin, going through the same set of interview questions I had used many times before, this woman who grew up in a small town in northern Sweden opened up in a remarkable way. About halfway through the interview, she realized that her instinctive opinions were at odds with what she believed on a more intellectual level. When I asked which she would consider "more Swedish," a family of ethnic Swedes living in the United States or a family of non-European descent living in Sweden and partaking in Swedish culture, she answered,

> Malin: Oh, that's a difficult question. So definitely, I'd rather say the Swedes living in America. The Swedish immigrants living in America. But that—I realize that that is wrong. That's quite interesting that I am actually some sort of conservative Swedish, that I, um, regard Swedish like Sweden was when I was a kid. [. . .] Yeah. Of course they are Swedish, the people that [are] actually living here in our society. Yeah, so I need to change my point of view.[82]

I found particularly striking Malin's admission that her first instinct is to consider ethnic Swedes more Swedish. She also believes that many other Swedes are more likely to consider the Swedish-Americans more "like them" than those with non-European descent. But not surprisingly, no other Swede I interviewed actually answered this way. Many people know that

[82] Interview File 090422_01, recorded April 22, 2009.

the "wrong" answer to that question is to say the Swedish-Americans are more like them, and so it is difficult to say for certain simply by asking if they truly believe immigrants are "more Swedish." What I find particularly remarkable is that while Malin knew what the "wrong answer" is, she did not shy away from it. Malin's candor and honesty, but more importantly her self-reflection, demonstrates that Swedes can indeed be aware of their prejudices and work to correct them.

Being aware that there are different ways of viewing the world and being willing to change your worldview are not things that occur in every environment equally. For instance, if the people in places like Rättvik stay only in their archetypical Swedish small towns and never expose themselves to new things, they will have no idea what to think when their world starts changing around them.[83] Tess helped me understand this when we met for an interview in her apartment on one of Stockholm City's main islands. I first met Tess, now a chemist, while we were studying at the University of Arizona. Originally from a town even smaller than Rättvik, she attributes her broadened perspective to her travels. For her, the parochial views of many Swedes are not surprising, given how insular such towns can be.

> Tess: If you're around 18 and you have lived with your parents up 'til then, and your parents have always heard your grandparents' opinions about foreign people and what they think about them moving here and, you know, "stealing our jobs" or whatever that they might hear. And then you hear that up 'til you're 18 [. . .] and really, if you don't move away from home, and you know, go somewhere else and do things, then those are pretty much your opinions too, right? Because you don't get your own opinions, you just

[83] Lest I depict small-town Swedes as wholly lacking worldly perspective, I should reiterate that the popularity of international, Anglo-American, media extends to rural areas, as well. The residents of these towns may also visit cities like Stockholm or go abroad to places like Thailand for vacation. But the key is that while they may enjoy exotic peoples and lifestyles in that context, they often have no desire to see it where they live.

heard your parents' your whole life. And you accepted those—and well, then you realize when you get a little bit older, if you move somewhere to get educated, that this is not how it is. My parents are a little bit wrong and I don't really agree with them. So it's like kind of going to a little bit of a . . . like you develop something there, where you feel like, "Oh, they're actually not right about this. I can't believe they say things like that all the time!" So the people that stay at home maybe are more—like not stay at home, but not go away to get educated. I can imagine that they would actually just keep these [. . .] same opinions as they were 18 because they never got a chance to hear anything else.[84]

An immigrant friend in Sweden had a saying: "The smaller the town, the smaller the mind." While a relatively sheltered life and lack of education can often lead to prejudices and racist tendencies, simply going to school in a big city does not automatically make someone free of prejudice. There must be an awareness of one's own beliefs and a desire to change. This is not always done, though, as simply putting on a façade is easier than changing how you think. Tess struggles with this periodically, having to unlearn what she was taught and what she passively learned from growing up in a small town.

Tess: I'm kind of in the position where I'm like dealing with, you know, hearing what my parents said. My parents I would still say they are . . . well, if you dig really hard enough, yeah, they are more racist than I am [smiles]. But I wouldn't consider myself racist, but—and they are less than my grandma. So if you see [laughs] it's going. So it's kind of the low on the scale, but it's still there. But this last summer, when I went out to like a beach and I, the closest family to me they were—they *looked*—foreign. And they spoke another language. [. . .] And I wanted to go into the water, and normally you ask someone, I

[84] Interview Files 090331_01 and 090331_02, recorded March 31, 2009.

> mean, "Can you look after my stuff?"—because I had my camera and my cell phone and my wallet and other things. And it took me maybe like half of a second before I was like, "Ah, I can just ask *them*." Because it's so well—like it's in your head that it's, like, you know, kind of grew up with asking a *Swedish family*. But like, I don't think that, way but I have to work with it, because I was brought up that way. Do you see what I mean? So if you ask them "Can you watch my things if I go into the water," of course they do, and they're just as honest as anybody else—that's not the thing. But if that would have been my parents 20 years ago, they wouldn't have asked them. Do you see the difference there? [. . .] Since I was brought up with that, I am working with it still. But they wouldn't even have asked.[85]

Tess seems to be in the middle of a shift in Swedish culture toward the gradual acceptance of non-ethnic Swedes as true members of society. For many in her parents' or grandparents' generation, tolerance is but a slogan, whereas those in their twenties or younger generally place more value on the concept and putting it into practice. Younger generations may have grown up with immigrant children and had at least the opportunity to meet people outside of their own culture. It would then stand to reason that older immigrants not only have had more time in Sweden associating with less-tolerant Swedes, but also work with people who are roughly the same age as themselves. If the other upper-level employees at Tomaj's job are roughly the same age as him, then—according to Tess—it would hardly be surprising that they would be so prejudiced.

One of the comments Tomaj made concerning his view of the future of immigrants in Sweden, while meant to be pessimistic, actually seemed rather optimistic to me.

[85] Interview Files 090331_01 and 090331_02, recorded March 31, 2009.

> Tomaj: If you compare Sweden with the U.S., or . . . There aren't so many people who have immigrant background. In the political parties, we have six or seven political parties; in the powerful positions, there are no immigrants. And when you look at the U.S., Barack Obama is black and he's the president. Colin Powell is black and he was secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice is black and she was secretary of state. What I see, I can't speak of U.S.A. very well, but what I see is blacks can be president but not here. So to go back, it takes time. Maybe one or two hundred years' time, Sweden will be a country where you are accepted as a Swede.[86]

I pointed out to him that as recently as 2006 people in the United States would have said the same thing about a black president, but they were proven wrong. About a month after talking with Tomaj, a Kurdish politician who was running for office called me and was interested in setting up a time for an interview. Our schedules did not match up, unfortunately, and I never did get to interview him, but the fact that immigrants and people of foreign background are entering Sweden's political sphere shows that the country as Tomaj and Nahid see it is slowly beginning to change.

The experience of being a non-ethnic Swede in Sweden appears to differ from generation to generation. So-called second-generation immigrants fare better than their parents, who are doubly hindered by cultural and linguistic differences and the prejudices of older Swedes. Those in their teens and twenties have an easier time integrating into the society, as they understand nuances of Swedish culture that can be off-putting to outsiders, while their Swedish peers are more accepting of diversity, having been born into a world where it is a reality. New ideas and new cultures introduced to Sweden are slowly altering the dominant paradigm, and in places

[86] Interview File 090521_01, recorded May 21, 2009.

lagom is surrendering to ostentatiousness and indulgence. Swedish high-schoolers are becoming more concerned with owning expensive brand-name clothes; Canada Goose jackets are particularly trendy among Swedish youth and owning one is a status symbol.[87]

Botkyrka's "Far from *lagom*" is supposed to mean "far from average" but also "far from being Swedish." As more Swedes of all ancestries grow up without an appreciation for the concept, *lagom* will likely cease to be a signifier of Swedishness. As demographics and what it means to be Swedish change, will the people of Botkyrka still consider themselves far from *lagom*?

Sweden's Hierarchy

Several immigrants from various backgrounds explained to me the race hierarchy operating in Sweden as they saw it. The least desirable groups were Africans and Middle Easterners, followed by Eastern Europeans, then Western Europeans, Nordic countries, Swedes and—according to my informants—Americans. They believed that Americans are more desirable and have more social capital in Sweden than even the Swedes. While my own experiences and the accounts from other social scientists (Utz McKnight, lecture November 19, 2008) contradict this on the everyday level, there are instances where being American can indeed put one in a superior position. For instance, during my first months of fieldwork I endeavored to speak Swedish with the locals rather than English, despite the fact that they were often more than willing to speak English for me. I assumed that they had picked up on my American accent and were either eager to try out their language skills on a native speaker or, given my previous

[87] With highly visible logos and price tags up to $700, the only real reason a teenager would need one of these jackets is to flaunt family wealth.

experience in Sweden in 2005,[88] they were condescendingly switching to English because of the stereotype that Americans are incompetent in foreign languages. As it turned out, I did not have a recognizably American accent and many people would not know where I was from unless I told them or spoke English.[89] This wound up being rather problematic when attempting to recruit interviewees over the phone as they did not hear an American but an unidentifiably foreign accent and it is likely they were placing me lower on the hierarchical ranking as a result.

My fieldwork was progressing much slower than I had anticipated, as people were rather noncommittal or dismissive in my attempts to recruit them. My Jordanian housemate suggested that I try speaking English to them since, as he claimed, the Swedes dislike nearly all foreigners but love Americans. I employed this tactic the next day, with surprising results: when I explained in Swedish who I was and what my project was about the woman said something to the effect of, "Oh, well I'm not the right person to be talking to. You should contact someone else." and was preparing to end the call. I then asked her, "Can you repeat that in English, please? My Swedish is still not very good." Her tone noticeably changed, "Of course! As I said, I don't think I'm the person you want to be talking to, I think that these people would be better able to help you (she then gave me three names and their contact information). But if you would still like to interview me I'd be happy to schedule a time." Here we have a situation highlighting the privilege Americans enjoy among Swedes as well as the lack of privilege most other immigrants experience.

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[88] My year abroad in Uppsala was during the start of George W. Bush's second term and people's opinions of Americans were quite low. Remarks like "dumb American" were common, as were suggestions that I was a gunslinger and puzzlement over why I was not obese.

[89] The main reason why Swedes chose to speak English to me turned out that because it was clear I was having difficulties speaking Swedish, and English is a global *lingua franca*, the chances that we could communicate more effectively in English were greater.

The reception of such prestige immigrants in Sweden does not seem to have an analogue in the United States. While people from the UK may be seen as more prestigious than other immigrants, they are native English speakers just like Americans. And while a French immigrant professor may hold more prestige than a Mexican farm worker, there are no immigrant groups that could come to the US and expect Americans to switch to their language. Swedes, on the other hand, due to the relatively arcane nature of Swedish in the global context, must speak English to Americans. In fact, when an American speaks English to strangers in Sweden, he can be in a more advantageous position than the native Swedes speaking Swedish to each other. From what I observed during my fieldwork, if I am asking something of a stranger, the person being asked is in a superior position because they have something I want and may refuse. If I do not speak Swedish as well as the person being asked then I am at a disadvantage to the native speaker, but if I can get the person being asked to speak in English then he is at a disadvantage to me as the native speaker. In other words, anyone asking something of another person is immediately at a bargaining disadvantage and anyone asking in a language they are not fluent in is then doubly disadvantaged. If the person asking can force the exchange to take place in his language, however, he levels the playing field. This is the way in which Americans, or any native English speaker, can be seen to have a higher position than the native Swedes. For situations that require speaking in Swedish, though—such as the job market—they are ranked with the rest of Western Europeans.

At face value, this unofficial hierarchical system flatly contradicts the Jante Law and the general Swedish emphasis on equality. However, the Jante Law's paradoxical nature can be explained by analyzing what exactly is the Swedish understanding of "equality." The word *likhet* can be translated as equality but also similarity or sameness (Daun 1996:181). This is a subtle

but important distinction. If someone is the same as you, then they are your equal but if they are dissimilar then it can be difficult to automatically make the connection that they are still equal. Recall that this was the same observation Mark Graham has shared with me during my time in Stockholm. If the Swedish community as a whole is to be thought of as the "Us" that the Jante Law warns you to be mindful of, then the commandments of the Jante Law can be seen as quite racist.

I asked my interviewees why it is that the Jante Law says a person is not to fancy themselves better than another but people are still racist. Tess suggested that the "jurisdiction" of the Jante Law might only cover Swedes and that those who are not considered Swedish are to think of themselves as lesser than them.

"Maybe *Jantelagen* doesn't extend to non-Swedish people, I don't know." She laughed nervously. "Uh, or maybe it's 'This is our country and here we *are* better than others.' Do you see what I mean by saying that? Like, 'You come here, you should show us respect.' Like, I'm not saying I'm thinking that, I'm just talking in general!"

"Yeah."

"That, that maybe it has something to do with that. It's a . . . yeah, that's really weird. Those two things really don't go together. And maybe something about that people think this is our country and we were here first kind of thing. And other people coming here, you haven't built this country up and therefore you aren't worth as much. Which is weird but maybe that is how people are thinking a little bit." She mused.

"Hmm. So *Jantelagen* is you're not allowed to feel you're better than another Swede."

Tess laughed, "I guess so! It sounds terrible, but I guess if you're racist that's how you think about *Jantelagen*. If you're not racist then you extend it a little bit further than that, hopefully."[90]

This occurs simultaneously with the true egalitarian Jante spirit as seen by the recognition of minority language rights before Swedish itself was made an official language, the payment of guest workers equal to that of Swedish wages and the fact that *osvensk*, "un-Swedish," is often a positive adjective in Sweden (Pederson 2009:1258). This is because Swedes stereotype themselves as dull and boring and something un-Swedish is exciting and lively (just like Botkyrka's "Far from *lagom*"). There are, of course, negatively un-Swedish things that people have no desire to visit or embrace, such as violence and sexism, which are seen as traits embodied in African and Middle Eastern immigrants. As a result, these populations are viewed with suspicion and placed lower on the hierarchy for their perceived antithetically-Swedish ways while positively un-Swedish Americans and other Anglophones are placed above Swedes.

[90] Interview Files 090331_01 and 090331_02, recorded March 31, 2009.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The conflation of equality and sameness represents one of the key points in understanding the contradiction between the Jante Law's insistence on egalitarianism and its xenophobic emphasis on the community over the outsider. Because every human being is different from any other, how similarity and difference are perceived ultimately determine how Swedes view people in terms of equality. Making non-ethnic Swedes similar enough to Swedes that they would be considered equal (i.e. forced assimilation) or decoupling the Swedish perception of equality from sameness to allow for "equal but different" are both very unlikely outcomes. However, in modern Sweden gender and class are apparently not considered "true" differences as equality on these fronts are extremely important values in both government and popular opinion (Daun 1996). This was not always the case. Likewise, equality of religion, culture and ethnic background are officially important but not especially popular on the societal level. Within a single generation Sweden's demographic and cultural makeup has radically shifted and much of what was considered true in the past no longer applies. The fact that these differences largely did not exist in the past may factor into the languid pace of the acceptance of these differences as inconsequential to true equality.

Sweden's history as a Lutheran, agricultural society has helped shape it into the welfare state it is today. The Jante Law is a central component of this, and its presence in Nordic countries that have welfare systems much like Sweden's highly suggest a connection. The Jante Law appears to be contradictory: while it discourages individual aggrandizement, it also seems to reinforce xenophobic attitudes. At the same time, the broader social manifestations of the Jante

Law have led to a universalistic welfare state and a generous refugee policy informed by humility and the belief that the benefits Sweden offers to residents are in accordance with basic human rights.

While the Jante Law's decree "Do not think that *you* are superior to *us*" directly contradicts assertions of white supremacy, racist thought and prejudiced behavior continue to be found in Sweden. The trend in the West called New Racism is certainly the primary reason for the shift from overt racism to discrimination under the auspices of cultural, linguistic and religious incompatibility. However, the Jante Law's strong discouraging of claiming any form of superiority over another person, as well as drawing attention to oneself by discussing unpopular opinions, has made addressing racism in Sweden particularly elusive.

Though a more parochial interpretation does indeed promote xenophobia, the effects the Jante Law has had in shaping the development of Swedish society as a whole have been quite positive. The formation of a highly gender equal society that is friendly to worker's rights and has minimal disparity in formal rights between citizens and non-citizens is something that would have been much harder to achieve in a more individualistic, class-oriented society. As Swank and Betz (2003) note, universal welfare states are political environments that curtail the success of radical right-wing populist parties. If the Jante Law provides the foundation and basic moral code for the universal welfare state, and such a government system is nonconductive to nationalistic, xenophobic political parties, then the Jante Law does indeed discourage racism. Rather than just being the oppressive ideology that Sandemose described or a counterproductive mindset that keeps Swedes from maximizing their potential, the Jante Law pushes racists down *exactly* like one would expect a doctrine that punishes people for thinking themselves better than others would do.

Colorblind racism and the Jante Law are peculiarly similar in how they operate; the former espouses treating everyone the same regardless of appearance, a very admirable worldview on the individual level, but when implemented on an institutional level such policies simply maintain the unjust status quo. The latter proclaims a harsh and pessimistic message that you are not special or more capable than anyone else and if internalized can lead a person to never realize his or her ambitions. When that same message is applied in government policy, however, it yields the egalitarian welfare state.

The continued presence of far right-wing parties, xenophobia and *smygrasism* in Sweden, while lamentable, is somewhat expected. As with any cultural model, there will always be people in a society that do not subscribe to it or do so only partially, with racism being a particularly stubborn phenomenon. Additionally, as I have shown, differing interpretations of the Jante Law still allow xenophobic tendencies to flourish, and a special emphasis on conformity contributes to *smygrasism*'s elusive prejudiced thoughts. Nevertheless, Swedish society has made efforts through its official policy in recent decades to show generosity and tolerance to the various peoples of the world. It must not be forgotten, however, that this has not always been the case. Sweden's past prior to the 20th century was every bit as imperialistic and xenophobic as any other country of that day. The difficult history of Finns in Sweden is abundant proof of this assertion and the parallels to their story and those of numerous immigrant and non-white populations in the US's history are striking.

While the trials and tribulations of the Kurds and Yugoslavs in Sweden are not as extensive as those of the Finns, they have only been present in Sweden for a fraction of the time. The Sweden they entered is a very different one than the Finns first entered; racial categorization as an official doctrine had been abandoned, but national, ethnic and religious discrimination still

exists in more insidious forms. *Smygrasism*, still informed by the prejudices of "Old Racism," is quite widespread, but its consequences are fortunately less violent than the racism in the United States and even elsewhere in Europe. Though Sweden has frequently seen the race situation in 20th century America as a lesson in what not to do, and providing a foil to their country's tolerant reputation, they now find themselves in a situation where they have to apply what they have learned from the U.S.'s mistakes. Their handling of Yugoslavs and modern Finns suggest they have applied some lessons, while the Islamophobia found throughout the West may prove to be a lesson the United States and Sweden will have to learn together. If the Jante Law is the key component to keeping radical nationalist parties in check, then its reported decline in the face of globalization may pose a serious problem to Sweden in the near future. As the number of non-ethnic Swedes living in Sweden increases, there is a distinct possibility xenophobic groups in Sweden may one day gain the levels of political influence found in other European countries. If the universal welfare state cannot find a means of perpetuating itself without the Jante Law, the Swedes may very well completely lose their reputation for egalitarianism and tolerance.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Information sheet for informed consent
TRADITIONAL RESEARCH INTERVIEW

Study title: Determining Influences on Immigrant Integration Into Swedish Culture

Introduction to the Study: I am Kevin Turausky of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. I am inviting you to be in a research study to find out how Swedes and people of foreign descent perceive multiculturalism in Sweden today. I plan to present the results of this study in my Master's Thesis, which may be published in an academic journal.

This is what will happen during the study (which will take place in Stockholm between February 10, 2009 and June 29, 2009): I will ask you to participate in one or two taped interviews. These interviews may include questions about social issues, your thoughts on integration of foreign persons into Swedish society, and your experience living in a multicultural society. Participation in each interview will take you about one to three hours. The project will pose no financial costs to you.

Protection of Privacy: I will make every effort to protect your privacy. I will not use your name in any of the information I get from this study or in any of my research reports. Any information I get in the study that lets me know who you are will be recorded with a code number. During the study the key tells me which code number goes with your information will be kept in a password-protected file. When the study is finished I will destroy the key that can link information to you personally.

Risks and Discomforts: I do not know of any personal risk or discomfort from being in this study. I do not know of any way you will personally benefit from participating in this study. The study will help create a greater understanding of the dynamics of immigrant integration and comparisons of the Swedish and immigrant views on a multicultural society.

Your Rights: You should decide on your own whether or not you want to be in this study. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you do decide to be in the study, you have the right to tell me you do not want to continue with the study and stop being in the study at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about being in this study, you should contact Kevin Turausky at kturausk@antho.umass.edu or +1 (520) 429-4687. My mobile number in Sweden is 070 468 7026.

Departmental Approval: The Department of Anthropology at University of Massachusetts Amherst has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may contact the European Field Studies Program Field Supervisor, Professor Brigitte Holt, via email (holtb@anthro.umass.edu) or telephone (39) 34-97-83-93-02.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND SIGN BELOW IF YOU AGREE
I have had the chance to ask any question I have about this study and my questions have been answered. I have read the information in this consent form and I agree to be in the study. There are two copies of this form. I will keep one copy and return the other to Kevin Turausky.

_____ _____
Signature Date

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM IN SWEDISH

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Informationsblankett för samtycke till
TRADITIONELL UNDERSÖKNINGS INTERVJU

Undersökningstitel: Att bestämma influenser på invandrares integration i svensk kultur

Introduktion till Undersökningen: Jag är Kevin Turausky från University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Jag bjuder in dig till att dela i en undersökning för att upptäcka hur svenskar och invandrare förstår mångkulturstruktur i Sverige numera. Jag planerar att presentera undersökningens resultat i min magisteruppsats, som kan komma att publiceras i en akademistidskrift.

Detta här är vad som kommer att ske i undersökningen (som äger rum i Stockholm mellan februari 10, 2009 och juni 29, 2009): Du kommer bli tillfrågad att medverka i en eller två bandade intervjuer. De här intervjuerna kommer omfatta samhällsfrågor, dina tankar kring integrering av invandrare i det svenska samhället, och dina erfarenheter av att bo i ett mångkulturellt samhälle. Varje intervju varar ca. 1-3 timmar. Undersökningen kommer inte att innebära någon för dig.

Anonymitetsförsäkran: Jag kommer att vidta störste möjliga åtgärder för att försäkra dig om din anonymitet. Ditt namn kommer inte alls framgå i någon del av min forskning. All information som jag får från dig, kommer att kopplas till en unik sifferkod så att jag kan identifiera dina uttalanden. Medan undersökningen pågår kommer beteckningen som säger vilken sifferkod tillhör din information att bevaras i en lösenordsskyddad datafil. När undersökningen är slut, förstör jag beteckningen som binder informationen till dig.

Risker och obekvämhet: Jag känner inte till om någon personlig risk eller obekvämhet som kan uppstå på grund av deltagande i undersökningen. Mig veterligen kan inte ditt deltagande i denna undersökning vara av fördel till dig på någon sätt. Undersökningen bidrar till en bättre förståelse för invandrarintegrering och jämförelser mellan svenska och invandrar perspektiv på en mångkulturstruktur.

Din rättigheter: Du avgör själv om du vill eller inte vill vara med i den här undersökningen. Du kommer inte att bli behandlad annorlunda om du väljer att inte delta i denna undersökning. Även om du beslutar att vara med i undersökningen, har du rätt att ångra dig vilket tillfälle som helst och därmed avbryta ditt deltagande.

Om du har frågor eller funderingar kring ditt deltagande, kontakta mig, Kevin Turausky, på kturausk@antho.umass.edu eller +1 (520) 429-4687. Mitt mobilnummer i Sverige är 070 468 7026.

Samtycke från mitt universitet: Antropologi Departementet vid University of Massachusetts Amherst har givit sig samtyckte till den här undersökningen. Om du har frågor eller funderingar berörande dina rättigheter som deltagare kan du kontakta Europeisk Fältstudie Program fältföreståndare, Professor Brigitte Holt, på epost (holtb@anthro.umass.edu) eller telefon (39) 34-97-83-93-02.

VAR VÄNLIG LÄS IGENOM OCH SKRIV UNDER OM DU TACKAR JA TILL ATT DELTA
Jag har fått tillfälle att ställa mina frågor om undersökningen och de har blivit besvarade. Jag har läst igenom informationen i denna blankett och samtycker till att delta i undersökningen. Det finns två kopior av denna blankett. Jag signerar den ena och lämnar den andra till Kevin Turausky.

_____ _____
Underskrift Datum

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ETHNIC SWEDES

-How old are you? / *Hur gammal är du?*

-Where were you born? / *Var föddes du?*

-Why do you live in Stockholm? / *Varför bor du i Stockholm?*

-What part of Stockholm do you live in? / *Vilken stadsdel i Stockholm bor du i?*

-What is your job? / *Vad arbetar du med?*

-How long have you had your current job? / *Hur länge har du arbetat på ditt nuvarande jobb?*

-How did you get your job? / *Hur fick du dett här jobbet?*

-Why did you decide to take this job? / *Varför valde du dett här jobb?*

-Are you happy with your job? Why or why not? / *Är du glad med dit jobb? Varför eller varför inte?*

-Tell me about the people at your workplace. / *Beskriv för mig folk på ditt arbetsplats?*

-Do you enjoy living in Stockholm/Sweden? / *Tycker du om att bo i Stockholm/Sverige?*

-What do you wish you had known before coming to Stockholm? / *Vad skulle du vilja ha vetat innan du kom till Stockholm?*

-Is it easy to get a job in Stockholm? Why or why not? / *Är det lätt att hitta ett jobb i Stockholm? Varför eller varför inte?*

-What is your opinion of Stockholmers? / *Vad tycker du om Stockholmarna?*

-What do you think about Sweden's refugee policy? / *Vad tänker du om Sveriges asylinriktning?*

-Do immigrants or people of immigrant background have an easy time here? Why or why not? / *Är det lätt för invandrar eller folk med utländsk bakgrund att bo i Sverige? Varför eller varför inte?*

-Are there some immigrant or ethnic groups that have an easier time living in Sweden than others? Which groups? Why? / *Finns det invandrar eller etniskgrupper i Sverige som har det lättare än andra grupper? Vilken grupper? Varför då?*

-What is the ethnic background of most of the immigrants or non-ethnic Swedes (NES) that you frequently see? / *Vad är etniskabakgrunden av flesta invandrar eller ickeetniskasvenskar (IES) som du ofta träffar?*

-Are there many immigrants or NES where you work or live? / *Finns det många invandrar eller IES på din arbetsplats eller hemområde?*

-Do most Swedes like immigrants or NES? / *Tycker de flesta svenskar om invandrar eller IES?*

-Is it difficult to talk about race or ethnicity? Either personally or for people in general. / *Är det jobbigt att prata om ras eller etnicitet? Är det sann för dig eller för folk allmän?*

-Is ethnicity something important or meaningful to you? Is it for most Swedes? / *Är etnicitet någonting viktig eller meningsam för dig? Är det för mesta svenskar?*

-Which do you consider to be the most important aspect of identity: Race and/or ethnicity, culture, nationality or religion? Would many Swedes agree with you? / *Vilken tror du är viktigaste sida om identitet: ras och/eller etnicitet, kultur, nationalitet eller religion? Skulle många folk hålla med dig?*

-Is it possible to say someone is "more Swedish" or "less Swedish" than another? What would that mean? / *Är det möjligt att saga någon är "mer svensk" eller "mindre svensk" än annat? Vad skulle menar det?*

-Whom would you consider to be "more Swedish": a family of pureblood ethnic Swedes living in the United States, or a family of people of non European descent living in Sweden, speaking perfect Swedish and partaking in Swedish culture? Would many Swedes agree with you?/ *Vem skulle du anser är "mer svensk": en svenskättling familj bor i USA, eller en familj som är inte etniska europeisk, som pratar perfekt svenska och deltar i svensk kultur? Skulle många svenskar hålla med dig?*

-How do you define racism? / *Hur definierar du rasism?*

-Do you see a difference between racism and xenophobia? If so, what is it?/ *Tror du finns det en skillnad mellan rasism och främlingsfiendlighet? Om ja, vad är det?*

-Is racism something common in Sweden? / *Är rasism något vanligt i Sverige?*

-Why do you think there is racism in Sweden? What is the mindset behind it? / *Varför tror du finns det rasism i Sverige? Vad är tänkesättet bakom det?*

-People often speak of a fear of immigrants, what exactly do they fear? / *Folk ofta pratar om en rädsla för invandrar, vad precis är folk rädd för?*

-How exactly do people discriminate against foreigners? How does it manifest itself? / *Hur precis diskriminerar folk mot invandrar? Hur manifesterar det?*

-I have heard of cases where employers discriminated against job applicants if their names appeared foreign, why would they do this? / *Jag hörde att ibland arbetsgivare diskriminerar mot sökande om deras namner låter utländsk, varför skulle de göra det?*

-What are some of the prejudices that people have about foreigners? Specifically, do you know what prejudices exist toward Finns, Yugoslavs or Iraqis? / *Vad är fördomer folk har mot invandrar? Vet du vilken fördomer existera mot finner, jugoslaver eller irakier?*

-Do you think it's better to blend in with people rather than stand out? / *Tror du det är bättre att passa in med folk hällre än skiljer sig?*

-What are some common traits of Swedes? Are these different from common traits of people not from Swedish culture? / *Vad är några vanliga drag som svenskar har? Är de olika från vanliga drag av folk som är inte från svensk kultur?*

-What is the Jante Law? Could you explain it to me? / *Vad är Jantelagen? Skulle du kunna förklara det för mig?*

-Where do Swedes learn about the Jante Law? / *Var lära sig svenskar Jantelagen?*

-Is the Jante Law very prevalent in Sweden today? / *Är Jantelagen viktig i Sverige numera?*

-Do immigrants accept the Jante Law? / *Accepterar invandrar Jantelagen?*

-Why is June 6th historically important? / *Vad är vikten med sjätte juni?*

-What are your thoughts on Sweden's National Day? / *Vad tänker du på Sveriges nationaldag?*

-What do Swedes want from immigrants and/or non-ethnic Swedes, or what do they want them to do? / *Vad vill svenskar från invandrar och/eller icke etniska svenskar, eller vad vill de göra?*

-Are the stories about "immigrant problems" one sees in the news accurate? Have you witnessed or experienced something like those stories? / *Är rapporter man lär på nyheter om "immigrantproblemen" sann? Har du sett eller upplevt någonting som rapporterna?*

-How do you define cultural assimilation? / *Hur definiera du kultur assimilering?*

-Should immigrants try to assimilate into Swedish society or is it OK for them to keep their old ways in Sweden? / *Bör immigranter försöker att assimilera in i svenskt societet eller är det godkänt för dem att hålla sig till gammal livsföringer i Sverige?*

-If racism is the belief that certain people are better than others, and the Jante Law says you are not supposed to feel better than anyone, why is there so many reported instances of racism? / *Om rasism är tron att några personer är bättre än annan, och Jantelagen säger man skall inte inbilla sig att man är bättre än någon, varför finns det så många rapporter om rasism?*

- What problems or issues does Sweden face today? / *Vad är problem eller frågor i Sverige numera?*

-In spite of all the difficulties concerning immigrants and non-ethnic Swedes living in Sweden, do you still believe that Sweden is a progressive country? / *Trots alla svårigheter omkring invandrar och icke etniska svenskar i Sverige, tror du fortfarande att Sverige är ett progressiv land?*

-In your opinion, what does it mean to be Swedish? What makes one person Swedish and not another? / *Vad tror du menas med att vara svensk? Vad gör en person svensk och inte en annan?*

-What are some things that would make someone consider themselves Swedish? / *Vad är saker som skulle föranleda någon att känner svensk?*

-Who should I visit to learn more about my questions? / *Vem bör jag gå till för att lära mig mera om mina frågor?*

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS AND NON-ETHNIC SWEDES

-How old are you? / *Hur gammal är du?*

-Where were you born? / *Var föddes du?*

-How long have you lived in Sweden? / *Hur länge har du bott i Sverige?*

-Why did you move to Stockholm? / *Varför flyttade du till Stockholm?*

-Do you have family here? / *Har du familj i Stockholm?*

-What part of Stockholm do you live in? / *Vilken stadsdel i Stockholm bor du i?*

-What is your job? / *Vad arbetar du med?*

-How long have you had your current job? / *Hur länge har du arbetat på ditt nuvarande jobb?*

-How did you get your job? / *Hur fick du dett här jobb?*

-Why did you decide to take this job? / *Varför valde du dett här jobb?*

-Are you happy with your job? Why or why not? / *Är du glad med dit jobb? Varför eller varför inte?*

-Tell me about the people at your workplace. / *Beskriv för mig folk på ditt arbetsplats?*

-Do you enjoy living in Stockholm/Sweden? / *Tycker du om att bo i Stockholm/Sverige?*

-What do you wish you had known before coming to Stockholm? / *Vad skulle du vilja ha vetat före du kom till Stockholm?*

-Is it easy to get a job in Stockholm? Why or why not? / *Är det lätt att hitta ett jobb i Stockholm?*

-What is your opinion of Stockholmers? / *Vad tycker du om Stockholmarna?*

-What do you think about Sweden's refugee policy? / *Vad tänker du om Sveriges asylinriktning?*

-Do immigrants or people of immigrant background have an easy time here? Why or why not? / *Är det lätt för invandrar eller folk med utländsk bakgrund att bo i Sverige? Varför eller varför inte?*

-Are there some immigrant or ethnic groups that have an easier time living in Sweden than others? Which groups? Why? / *Finns det invandrar eller etniskgrupper i Sverige som har det lättare än andra grupper? Vilken grupper? Varför då?*

-What is the ethnic background of most of the immigrants or non-ethnic Swedes (NES) that you frequently see? / *Vad är etniskabakgrunden av flesta invandrar eller ickeetniskasvenskar (IES) som du ofta träffar?*

-Are there many immigrants or NES where you work or live? / *Finns det många invandrar eller IES på din arbetsplats eller hemområde?*

-Do most Swedes like immigrants or NES? / *Tycker de flesta svenskar om invandrar eller IES?*

-Is it difficult to talk about race or ethnicity? Either personally or for people in Sweden in general. / *Är det jobbigt att prata om ras eller etnicitet? Är det sann för dig eller för folk i Sverige allmänt?*

-Is ethnicity something important or meaningful to you? Is it for Swedes? / *Är etnicitet någonting viktig eller meningsam för dig? Är det för svenskar?*

-Which do you consider to be the most important aspect of identity: Race and/or ethnicity, culture, nationality or religion? Would many Swedes agree with you? / *Vilken tror du är viktigaste sida om identitet: ras och/eller etnicitet, kultur, nationalitet eller religion? Skulle många folk hålla med dig?*

-How do you define racism? / *Hur definierar du rasism?*

-Do you see a difference between racism and xenophobia? If so, what is it?/ *Tror du finns det en skillnad mellan rasism och främlingsfiendlighet? Om ja, vad är det?*

-When people say, "I'm not a racist, but…" do they mean they're not xenophobic or do they actually mean racist? / *När folk säger, "Jag är ingen rasist, men…" menar de är inte främlingsfiendlig eller riktig rasist?*

-Is racism something common in Sweden? / *Är rasism något vanligt i Sverige?*

-Why do you think there is racism in Sweden? What is the mindset behind it? / *Varför tror du finns det rasism i Sverige? Vad är tänkesättet bakom det?*

-People often speak of a fear of immigrants, what exactly do they fear? / *Folk ofta pratar om en rädsla för invandrar, vad precis är folk rädd för?*

-How exactly do people discriminate against foreigners? How does it manifest itself? / *Hur precis diskriminerar folk mot invandrar? Hur manifesterar det?*

-I have heard of cases where employers discriminated against job applicants if their names appeared foreign, why would they do this? / *Jag hörde att ibland arbetsgivare diskriminerar mot sökande om deras namner låter utländsk, varför skulle de göra det?*

-Do you feel Swedes discriminate against you? How and why? Could you describe it for me? / *Känns du att svenskar diskriminera mot dig? Hur och varför? Skulle du kunna beskriva det för mig?*

-Do you experience discrimination from people other than Swedes? Which groups? / *Upplever du diskriminering från andra gruppar som är inte svensk? Vilken gruppar?*

-What are some of the prejudices that people have about foreigners? Specifically, do you know what prejudices exist toward Finns, Yugoslavs or Iraqis? / *Vad är fördomer folk har mot invandrar? Vet du vilken fördomer existera mot finner, jugoslaver eller irakier?*

-What do you feel the Swedes want from you as a NES or want you to do? / *Vad tror du svenskarna vill från dig som en ickeetniskasvensk eller vill du att göra?*

-How do you define cultural assimilation? / *Hur definiera du kultur assimilering?*

-Should immigrants try to assimilate into Swedish society or is it acceptable for them to keep their old ways in Sweden? / *Bör immigranter försöker att assimilera in i svenskt societet eller är det godkänt för dem att hålla sig till gammal livsföringer i Sverige?*

-Do you think it's better to blend in with people rather than stand out? / *Tror du det är bättre att passa in med folk hällre än skiljer sig?*

-What are some common traits of your particular cultural background? Are these different from common traits of Swedes? / *Vad är några vanliga drag som folk från din kultur har? Är de olika från vanliga drag som svenkar har?*

-Have you heard of the Jante Law? Could you explain it to me? / *Hörde du om Jantelagen? Skulle du kunna förklara det för mig?*

-What are your thoughts on Sweden's National Day? / Vad *tänker du på Sveriges nationaldag?*

-What problems or issues is Sweden facing today? / *Vad är problem eller frågor i Sverige numera?*

-In spite of all the difficulties concerning immigrants and non-ethnic Swedes living in Sweden, do you still believe that Sweden is a progressive country? / *Trots alla svårigheter omkring invandrar och icke etniska svenskar i Sverige, tror du fortfarande att Sverige är ett progressiv land?*

-In your opinion, what does it mean to be Swedish? What makes one person Swedish and not another? / *Vad tror du menas med att vara svensk? Vad gör en person svensk och inte en annan?*

-What are some things that would make someone consider themselves Swedish? / *Vad är saker som skulle föranleda någon att känner svensk?*

-Who should I visit to learn more about my questions? / *Vem bör jag gå till för att lära mig mera om mina frågor?*

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