

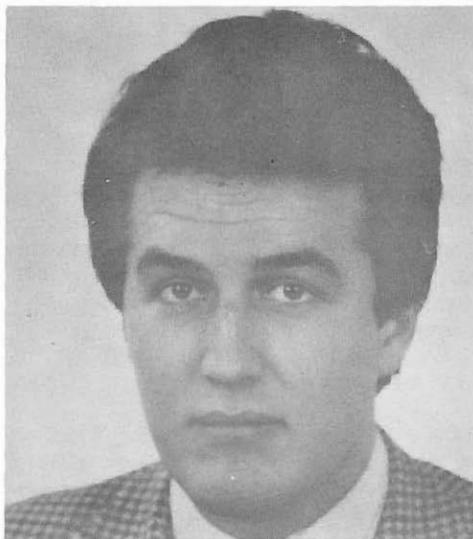
# The second generation Finns of Argentina: A process towards Argentinization

This paper will focus on the assimilation of the second generation Finns of Argentina. Specifically, for this study 53 of the first, and 72 second generation families will be used for our sample. Using both historical, and genealogical criteria, can this reveal smothering of the assimilation experience of the second generation?

## The consequences of Finnish colonization to Misiones, Argentina

Finnish group settlement to Latin America came fairly late if we compare it with immigration to the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Australia. The whole continent was almost bypassed until 1906 when two Finnish colonies sprang up: Colonia Finlandesa, Argentina, and Ponnistus, Cuba. The attempted colony of Cuba encountered big difficulties and was short lived.

The Colonia Finlandesa was never an "easy prospect" for colonization. When in 1906 the first group of 133 Finns sailing 1000km north of Buenos Aires by the "Parana" river were heading towards a collision course. Their first year brought an unexpected drought which caused severe forest



During 1977-78, Enrique Tessieri has carried out fieldwork among the Finns of Argentina and Paraguay. This year he plans to extend his study towards the Finnish colony of Penedo, Brazil. Being an Argentine-Finn and having received his B.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles in anthropology has motivated him to study their integration in Latin America. His studies here in Finland are made possible by a stipend from the Education Ministry.

fires and a rare invasion of locusts almost sealed the fate of the whole venture.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 2/3 of the original group moved back to Finland, United States, or other parts of Argentina.

Immigration from Finland after 1906 was very small until 1920 when renewed immigration especially from Eastern Finland arrived to the area. Roughly 60 settlers established themselves permanently. This "injection" lasted until the middle 1930's. World War II made immigration from Finland almost impossible. After this last wave no significant numbers of Finns were destined to the colony.

In the 1940's the colony started to lose members through simple abandonment. The greatest amount of people to leave the colony were the children of the original settlers. The colony ever since has been on the decline and today it is only a mere reflection of what it once used to be were only a handful have opted to stay.

The colony was never to become an economic bonanza. The land was very poor being of rocky nature and with few natural streams. Because of these reasons, the lots reaching 25-100he could only cultivate a small portion of their lots. If the children in reaching maturity were to better their economic situation, they had no other choice but to move out.

### **Towards Argentinization**

Because the colonization experience of the first generation was not an economic success, this had in great part to do with the assimilation of the second generation. The original settlers had the right idea: if we live and work together, we can also practice and preserve our culture.

Even today the colony is very secluded. Only a small dirt road ("picada") connects it with the outside world. The two official governmental institutions to be established were the post office and later the primary school. In 1932, the first Lutheran Swedish Church was constructed 30 kilometers away from the colony. Today, the nearest police stations are five kilometers from the geographical center of the Colonia Finlandesa. Because of their secluded nature, this has meant in great part that "Finnishness" could function almost unmolested by Argentine authority.

A large group of Poles, Swedes, and Russians established themselves in the colony during the 1920's and 30's. Roberts E. Eids,

"Pioneer Settlement in Northeastern Argentina", points out that the Argentine government wanted the rapid breakdown in the cultural identity of the foreigners.<sup>2</sup> The government achieved this by allowing foreigners no matter what national, religious, linguistical or cultural background they held to also settle in the colonies. In many colonies this heterogeneous cultural make-up brought outright suspicion preventing naturally conservative farmers from working harmoniously.<sup>3</sup> This was to a certain degree with the Finns of the Colonia Finlandesa. More important it paved the road towards assimilation.

### **Intermarriage & Assimilation**

One of the significant aspects of Finnish immigration to Latin America has been its unequal sex distribution. Of the 875 settlers that emigrated to Latin America from 1923-41, 73% were men.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the great majority of the second generation had to search outside their ethnic group for mates. Many of these men would have probably remained if they could have married.

Of the 72 second generation marriages 71% married outside of their group. Of these 38% married with "Northern Europeans" and only 33% with "Latin" surnames. Only 29% intra-married. Because of the high out-group marriages, this made it very difficult to conserve their parents language. When a second generation Finn married outside his group, it would often mean that his/hers parents language would not be spoken as the main language, but instead Spanish, most important their children would not learn Finnish. During my own fieldwork I noticed that those third generation Finns that managed to speak some Finnish were those whose parents had married within the same national group.



A family that has still remained at the Colonia Finlandesa (Almafuerte). Many second generation Finns as Reino Putkuri intermarried with Northern Europeans as second generation German, Guillermina Ripec. Their main home language is Spanish.



Hedvig Niskanen who came in 1912 sits by her two grandchildren Mirta and Carmen. Both do not speak any Finnish. The high outgroup marriages and the failure of the colony contributed to the downfall of the importance of Finnish culture as a means of survival.

Recent Studies have shown that fertility is a variable indicative of social change. Goldstein, has pointed out in his study among the Thai that migration itself, as well as migration to industrialized centers has a depressing effect on fertility.<sup>5</sup> Macisco suggests a similar explanation to account for his findings in Puerto Rico that urban migrant fertility being lower than urban native fertility.<sup>6</sup> As per our sample, what can be seen by the fertility levels of the second generation with respect to ethnic group they married to?

Table 1 points out that those who married with "Latins" showed higher "large", and smaller "small" size families than those who married with "Northern Europeans" and "Finns". Even though the "Mioole" size families are almost identical for each group, the "Latin" group shows a tendency towards "large" families. Argentina has received immigration from all corners of the earth. Historically, culturally, and politically the nation is oriented towards "Southern Europe". The "Latin" group represents a culturally more "entrenched" majority: hence, assimilation has been faster.

Table 1. *The fertility of the second generation Finns as per intra/inter marriage and ethnicity.*

children	Finnish N= 21		N.European N= 27		Latin N= 24	
0	9.5%	} 43%	3.7%	} 44%	4.2%	} 33%
1	14.3%		22.2%		4.2%	
2	19.0%		18.5%		25.0%	
3	23.8%	} 29%	22.2%	} 30%	8.3%	} 29%
4	4.8%		7.4%		20.8%	
5	9.4%		3.7%		12.5%	
6 and above	19.0% 100%	28%	22.2% 100%	26%	25.0% 100%	38%

– four marriages into "Arabic" surnames has been placed with the "Latin" group.

The "Northern European" and "Finnish" group has almost similar fertility levels with higher "small" and "large" size families than the "Latin" group. Colonization to Misiones started to take steam during the turn of the century. Even in 1938, Misiones had 30% of its total foreign population foreign born.<sup>7</sup> This indicates that the "Northern Europeans" also could be in great majority children of foreigners. As with the Finns, they represent a minority and a less "entrenched" culture than the "Latin" group.

### The fertility of the first and second generation: a transition

What attitudes persisted with the second generation? Did the close national ties of their parents to the Old Country, and their living in a cultural geographical area throughout most of their childhood and adolescence lead to any changes in the fertility levels of the two generations?

From table 2 we see a change in the fertility levels of the first and second generation. The first generation is characterized by low fertility of which 58% had "small" families. Among the second generation we see a drop (18%) in "small" families, and a rise (8% & 10%) in "middle" and

"large" size families. Which demonstrates that their attitudes concerning fertility have changed.

Table 2. *The fertility of the first and second generation Finns.*

children	First N= 53		Second N= 72	
0	11.3%	} 58%	5.6%	} 40%
1	20.8%		13.9%	
2	26.4%		20.8%	
3	11.3%	} 21%	18.1%	} 29%
4	9.4%		11.1%	
5	11.3%		8.3%	
6 and above	9.4% 100%	21%	22.2% 100%	31%

In Ira Rosenwaike's article, "Two Generations of Italians in America: Their Fertility Experience", points out that the second generation had lower fertility levels than their parents which are characterized by high fertility.<sup>8</sup> She further states that the second generation had even lower fertility levels than native American women. This means that the second generation Italians have almost assimilated 180° if fertility can be used to "measure" assimilation.

Because the sample, and Finnish colonization to Argentina is so small, it is impossible to compare it with the national growth rate of the province. What can be mentioned is that the growth rate of Misiones from 1881 to 1947 reached 3.9%.

From 1947 to 1967 the growth rate averaged 3.5% per year.<sup>9</sup> This figure represents one of the highest rates in Latin America and is especially significant in Argentina where the national rate of population increase from 1914 to 1967 averaged only 2%.<sup>10</sup>

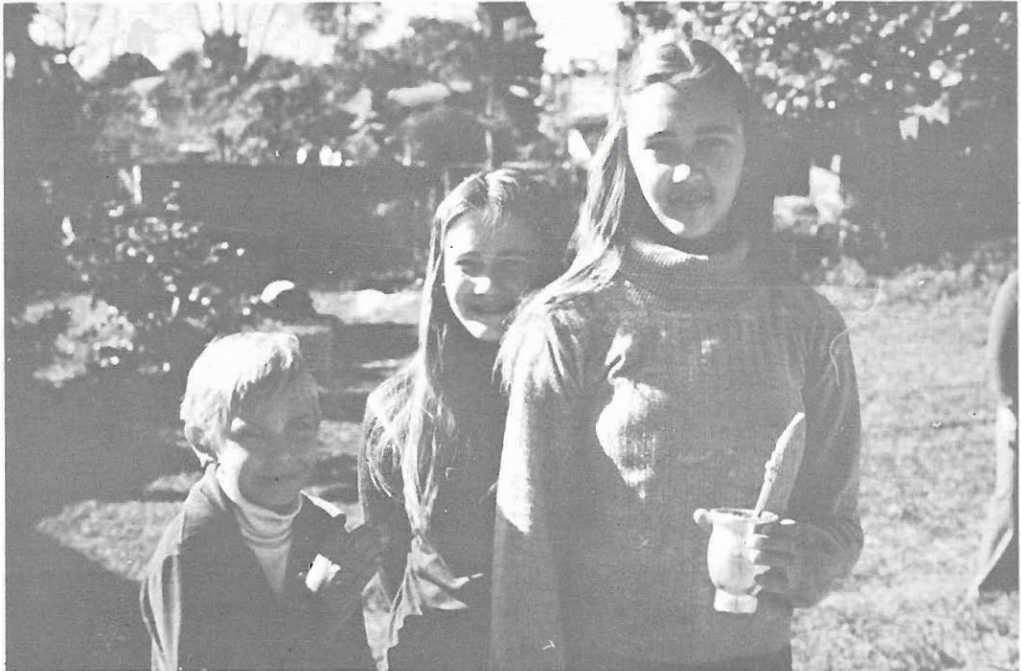
The two generations of Finns in Argentina represent a group that is extremely mobile. The original sailed from one extreme of the earth to the other. The second generation in reaching maturity: roughly 80% moved out of the colony. This mobility has even persisted to the third generation. The majority of the second generation have opted to stay in Misiones. This lack of permanence and a feeling of "home" may well have contributed to the high number (40%) of small size families among the second generation. Only those that married with "Latin" surnames show different

fertility levels to the first and second generation as a whole.

## CONCLUSIONS

Berry Brewton has stated that assimilation is "the process whereby groups with different culture come to have a common culture".<sup>11</sup> This definition serves well for the second generation Finns. What has happened to the Finns has happened to the Italians, Poles, French, Spaniards, Swedes, Japanese, British -- becoming part of a common cultural and national identity.

The second generation Finns of the Colonia Finlandesa where assimilated by two main factors: (1) the economic failure of the colony resulting in dispersal of the community; and (2) the high percentage of out-group marriages.



The Finnish heritage in Argentina spans four generations. Ernesto, Rosana and Graciela Bonneau represent the upcoming generation. Because the great amount of second generation Finns married outside their group, we see the fourth generation with Italian, German, French, Spanish, Swedish, Indian and Russian heritage. This rich mixture of races represents the Argentine.

Because Finnish colonization to Latin America -- as well as Argentina -- has been so small one method of preserving their culture would be by living and working together as opposed to living in a large metropolis. As the colony could not provide any means for advancement for the children of the original settlers -- the only option was to move out. This can in great part be attributed to the poor location of the colony. As the community disbanded and disorganized, the process of assimilation started to take place even faster. Erkki Asp's "A Case of Acculturation", speaks of a similar experience as with the Lapps. Because many young people could find no way in progressing in their home communes they also had to move to other parts. Hence the distance from their culture and their presence to a majority started them on the process of Finnicization.<sup>12</sup> The second generation Finns could not fend of the pressure of the majority.

The greatest amount of marriages have been outside the group. This has meant the adoption of a new main language -- Spanish. Finnish was not needed to function outside of the colony. What is more important is that their children would not hear Finnish at home. Only those that have intra-married show a tendency of their children to speak Finnish.

The second generation demonstrates how the process of becoming part of a common culture had begun. Probably their experience reflect those of other nationalities -- slowly assimilating and becoming part of a new national and cultural identity -- Argentines.

## FOOTNOTES

1. EIDT, Robert E., *Pioneer Settlement in Northeastern Argentina*. Madison, Wisconsin 1971. p. 102
2. Ibid., p. 197
3. Ibid., p. 197
4. Siirtolaisuustilasto, 1923-42.
5. GOLDSTEIN, Sidney, "Interrelations between Migration and Fertility in Thailand", *Demography*, 10:255-40. May.
6. MACISCO, John J, Jr., "Fertility in Puerto Rico" An Ecological Study", *Sociological Analysis*, 26 (Fall 1965), pp. 157-164
7. BUNGE, Alejandro, *Una Nueva Argentina*. Buenos Aires 1940. p. 137
8. ROSENWAIKE, Ira, "Two Generations of Italians in America: Their Fertility Experience", *International Migration Review* vol. 7 (Fall 1973). pp. 271-80
9. EIDT, Robert E., *Pioneer Settlement in Northeastern Argentina*. Madison Wisconsin 1971. p. 186
10. Ibid., p. 186
11. BERRY, Brewton, *Race Relations* Boston, 1951. p. 217
12. ASP, Erkki, *The Finnicization of the Lapps: A Case of Acculturation*. Forssa 1966.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Suuret vaikeudet kohtasivat alkuaikoina argentiinansuomalaista siirtokuntaa Colonia Finlandesaa. Kova kuivuus aiheutti metsäpaloja ja suuret heinä-sirkkaparvet, jotka muutoin olivat harvinaisia, hyökkäsivät pelloille ja saivat aikaan suurta tuhoa. Vuonna 1906 saapuneista 133 suomalaisesta arviolta noin 2/3 jätti koko siirtokuntayrityksen ja palasi takaisin Suomeen tai muutti Argentiinan muihin osiin ja Amerikkaan. Siirtolaisuus Argentiinaan oli melko vähäistä vuoden 1906 jälkeen, mutta 1920-luvulla toi uusi muuttoaalto noin 60 suomalaista lähinnä Itä-Suomesta Colonia Finlandesaan. Toisen maailmansodan aikana ja jälkeen ei siirtolaisuutta Suomesta Argentiinaan juuri tapahtunut.

Colonia Finlandesa on maaperältään mäkistä ja kivistä, vain muutama puro virtaa sen läpi. Viljelykseen kelpaavaa maata on noin 25-100 ha, eikä se tarjoa kovinkaan hyviä mahdollisuuksia elintason ylläpitämiseen ja kohottamiseen. Tästä syystä monet siirtokunnan jäsenistä, enemmistönä toisen sukupolven edustajat, muuttivat pois siirtokunnasta. Useimmat heistä kuitenkin jäivät ympäröivälle maaseudulle Misionesiin.

1920-1930-luvuilla muutti Colonia Finlandesaan ruotsalaisia, venäläisiä ja puolalaisia siirtolaisia. Argentiinan hallitus pyrki sulattamaan mahdollisimman nopeasti ulkomaalaisten mukanaan tuomat kulttuurit. Tästä syystä eri kansallisuuksia, kieliryhmiä ja uskontoja pyrittiin sekoittamaan keskenään asuttamalla heidät samoille alueille. Suomalaisen tietty omaleimaisuus, joka toisaalta yhdisti heitä, herätti epäluuloja monissa siirtokunnissa, mutta he saivat kuitenkin ylläpitää omaa kulttuuriaan suhteellisen rauhallisesti, virkavallan häiritsemättä. Suomalaiset ymmärsivät, että heidän olisi pysyttävä yhdessä, pystyäkseen säilyttämään ja suojelemaan omaa kulttuuriaan ulkopuolisilta vaikutteilta. Tänä päivänä yhteisö on eristäytynyt, vain kapea tie yhdistää sen ulkopuoliseen maailmaan.

Suomen siirtolaisuus Latinalaiseen Amerikkaan vuosina 1923-41 oli epäyhtenäistä ja siinä ilmeni suuria eroja mm. sukupuolten välillä. Muuttaneista 73% oli miehiä. Koska suurin osa naisista oli jo naimisissa, tuli aviopuolison valitseminen oman ryhmän ulkopuolelta välttämättömäksi. Lähempään tarkasteluun valituista toisen suku-

polven 72 perheestä oli 71% naimisissa oman ryhmän ulkopuolisen kanssa. Näistä 38%:lla oli pohjois-eurooppalainen sukunimi, 38%:lla latinalainen. Puhtaasti suomalaisten välisiä avioliittoja oli vain 29%. Seka-avioliittojen suureen määrään vaikuttaa osittain se, että toisen sukupolven argentiinansuomalaiset olivat vieraantuneet vanhempiensa kulttuurista. Suurin osa niistä, jotka menivät naimisiin ulkomaalaisten kanssa jättivät äidinkielensä ja ryhtyivät käyttämään kotikielensä espanjaa, kun sen sijaan suomalaisten avioparien lapset säilyttivät paremmin suomen kielen taidon. Yleisenä havaintona on, että latinalaisten kanssa naimisissa olevat ovat sopeutuneet uuteen kulttuuriin ja kansallisuuteen nopeammin kuin muut ryhmät, joiden keskuudessa assimiloituminen on ollut hitaampaa ja jotka ovat säilyttäneet kauemmin vanhempiensa kulttuurin ja sille ominaiset piirteet.

Nykyisin assimilaatiotutkijat käyttävät hedelmällisyyttä sopeutumisen indikaattorina, koska siirtolaisuuden on todettu vaikuttavan alentavasti hedelmällisyyteen verrattuna esim. paikallaanpysyvään väestöön. Tarkasteltaessa ensimmäisen ja toisen sukupolven välisiä eroja Misionesissa, havaittiin, että ensimmäisen sukupolven hedelmällisyys on yleensä alhainen, 58% on pienperheitä (0-2 lasta). Toisen sukupolven keskuudessa pienten perheiden osuus oli laskenut, sitä vastoin tapahtuu nousua keski- ja suurperheissä (8% ja 10%). Toisen sukupolven suomalaiset olivat siis naimisissa kolmea eri kansallisuutta edustavien kanssa. Suomalais-latinalaisissa perheissä perheiden koko on yleensä suurempi (suurperheitä 38%) kuin suomalais-pohjoiseurooppalaisissa (26%) tai puhtaasti suomalaisissa perheissä (28%). Tähän on osaltaan vaikuttanut se, että latinalaiset edustivat enemmistö-kulttuuria historiallisesti, poliittisesti ja sivistyksellisesti, josta johtuen heidän sulautumisensa on ollut nopeampaa kuin pohjois-eurooppalaisten ja suomalaisten, jotka ovat olleet vähemmistönä.

Toisesta sukupolvesta nähdään, miten tapahtui identifioitumista uuteen kansallisuuteen. Sama sulautumisprosessi, joka tapahtuu toisen polven suomalaisten kohdalla, voi esiintyä vastaavana muidenkin kansallisuuksien (esim. venäläisten, puolalaisten jne.) sopeutuessa uuteen kulttuuriin ja kansalliseen identiteettiin - argentiinalaisuuteen.