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The Nordic in the Scientific Racial Discourses in the United States and Northern Europe in the Interwar Period: The Passing of Greatness

Introduction

The term *Nordic* in relation to race science was introduced in the early twentieth century in the United States by Madison Grant. Though the notion of the supremacy of the races of Northern Europe was frequently discussed in the nineteenth century, the prominent terms in this discussion were *Aryan* or *Teutonic*, rather than *Nordic*. The shift from Aryan to Nordic was a gradual one. Between 1853 and 1855, the term *Aryan race* was first used by the French author Arthur de Gobineau to describe what he regarded as the superior race of Northern Europe.¹ In 1899, the economist William Ripley introduced the term *Teutonic race*, which, according to him, was based mainly in the United States, Great Britain and Germany.² He did not specifically consider Scandinavia in his definition.

Madison Grant then introduced the term *Nordic* and put the Nordic countries – or to be more precise, Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) – on the racial map as the core of civilisation and political order.³ In the young historian and journalist Lothrop Stoddard (1883–1950) Grant found a protégée who continued his legacy of scientific racism well into the 1930s with books like *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (1922) and *The Racial Realities in Europe* (1924).⁴ Both were convinced that the Nordic race was superior and the most civilised of all races, the race that led any great nation to success. They argued that only with a high degree of Nordic blood could a society be politically,

1 Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai Sur l'inégalité Des Races Humaines*, 3 vols (Hanover: Rumpler, 1853).

2 William Zebina Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899).

3 John P. Jackson and Nadine M. Weidman, "The Origins of Scientific Racism," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 50 (2005): 66–79.

4 Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* (New York: Scribner, 1920); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Racial Realities in Europe* (New York: Scribner, 1924).

economically, and socially successful. If the degree of Nordic blood decreased in a society, civilisation would likewise decline.⁵

This terminological shift was connected to an interplay of scientific and political changes. The increasing interest of racial scientists and anthropologists in the understanding of human races was related to the political climate in the United States. This was influenced by fears of poorer European immigrants seeking their fortunes in the new world and the impact of this on US society.⁶ There was a consolidation of racial discourse in science especially after the turn of the century, and after the Great War this discourse found its way into politics and society. This discussion peaked in the Immigration Act of 1924, which regulated immigration to the United States on racial grounds. The Act favoured people from Northern Europe and prevented Southern and Eastern Europeans from entering the United States.⁷

However, the idea of a superior Nordic race found support not only in the United States but also in many Northern European countries. In Germany, for example, leading racial scientists like Eugen Fischer, Fritz Lenz, and Hans F.K. Günther discussed notions of a superior *nordische Rasse* and its possible decline through race mixing.⁸ In the Nordic countries, racial biologists, such as the Swede Herman Lundborg, adopted the term *nordisk* in their race studies in the early twentieth century, though its use did not originate there. The adoption of Nordic terminology in the Nordic countries followed a pattern familiar from other usages of the rhetorics of Nordicism – it was largely an adoption of US uses.⁹

The term “Nordic” [*nordisch/nordisk*] was the key term in racial science and the conceptualization of racial superiority and hierarchy in early twentieth-century Germany and Sweden. In Germany, the racial theorists Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz published their book *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und*

5 Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: C. Scribner, 1936); Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University Press of New England, 2009).

6 Kristofer Allfeldt, “‘And We Got Here First’: Albert Johnson, National Origins and Self-Interest in the Immigration Debate of the 1920s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (January 2010): 7–26, doi:10.1177/0022009409348019.

7 Allfeldt, “‘And We Got Here First.’”

8 Hans F.K. Günther, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel. Der heldische Gedanke* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann Verlag, 1920); Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (München: J.F. Lehmann, 1931), 547.

9 Carl Marklund and Klaus Petersen, “Return to Sender – American Images of the Nordic Welfare States and Nordic Welfare State Branding,” *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 43, no. 2 (January 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1515/ejss-2013-0016>.

Rassenhygiene (1921/1931) in which they claimed that the members of the *nordische Rasse* were the bravest and most intelligent.¹⁰ Here *nordisch* refers to a geographical area occupied mainly by people of the *nordische Rasse* – Northern Europe, Northwest Europe, and the coastal areas of the North and Baltic seas.¹¹ These theorists declared the term *germanisch* to be a term of the past, used because the *nordische Rasse* had its origin in the German *Kaiserreich* of the Middle Ages and had developed from there.¹² The term *Aryan*, as used by Ripley in 1899, was for them a purely linguistic term that did not relate to the cultural context.¹³ While the German racial scientists saw the origin of the Nordic race in Germany, the Swedish researchers, such as the racial biologist Herman Lundborg, understood Sweden as the geographical centre of the *nordisk ras*. He, as with Grant and the German colleagues, used the term *nordisk* to refer to a geographical location its inhabitants. Yet, he argued that the *nordisk ras* was mainly defined by an anthropological bond and that no racial hierarchies could be detected between the Nordic race and other European races.¹⁴ The different conceptualisation and nationally defined use of the terms *Nordic*, *nordisch*, and *nordisk* had an effect on the racial implications made by the different researchers as well as the racist results of their research.

This chapter discusses Grant and Stoddard's conceptualisation of the Nordic race as a superior race. The primary question is: how did Grant and Stoddard form the notion of Nordicism in their racial theory? Why did Grant and Stoddard use the term Nordic rather than following William Ripley's conceptualisation of the Teutonic or Germanic race?¹⁵ Since the discourse of the Nordic race was not limited to the United States but similar ideas emerged at the same time in Europe, I compare how the concept of Nordicism and Nordic race can be understood in the context of similar ideas, taking Sweden and Germany as case studies. I chose Sweden as the exemplary case for the Nordic countries because in Nordic racial theory the Nordic countries constituted the core area of the Nordic race with the "purest" Nordic people. Yet, though the Nordic race discourse was very active in Sweden in the interwar period, no political radicalisation resulted from it. As the second case, I selected Germany because German racial theorists considered Germany to be a country with a significant number of Nordic people

10 Baur, Fischer, and Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 547.

11 Baur, Fischer, and Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 147.

12 Baur, Fischer, and Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 541.

13 Baur, Fischer, and Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 542.

14 Herman Lundborg, *The racial Characters of the Swedish Nation* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1926); Herman Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes* (Jena: Fischer, 1928).

15 Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study*.

and the idea of Nordic superiority was politically radicalised in the 1930s. I show how the geographical and political environment shaped the concept of the Nordic race, despite the cross-national similarities of the discourse. Here, notions of a transnational transfer of culture and knowledge are relevant to demonstrate how the knowledge and understanding of the concept of the Nordic race travelled across the Atlantic Ocean and within Europe in the early twentieth century.¹⁶

In 2011, Johannes Burgers compared Grant's racial theory to the theories of Hungarian Zionist Max Nordau.¹⁷ I build on this comparative literature. The emphasis here is not on Grant's biography, rather it is on Grant's conceptualization of the Nordic race and his contribution to the development of a movement proclaiming Nordic and White supremacy in the United States during the 1920s.

Many thinkers engaged in discussions about the concept of a Nordic race in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s. In what follows, I draw on studies of these debates by Nikola Karcher, Hans-Jürgen Lutzhöft, and Gunnar Broberg with Nils Roll-Hansen, as well as my own work, and for the Swedish context, on studies by Mattias Tydén and Maria Björkman to show the similarities and differences between the Northern European and US Nordic discourse.¹⁸

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the development of scientific racism and the conceptualization of the Nordic race as a superior race in the United States, with a particular focus on the works of Grant and Stoddard. I show why Grant and Stoddard favoured the term *Nordic* over the previous terms *Germanic* or *Teutonic* and how this conceptual turn took place. In the second part, I place the US discourse in relation to similar discourses in Germany and Sweden. I show that despite common fears about the degeneration of the

16 Stefan Nygård and Johan Strang, "Facing Asymmetry: Nordic Intellectuals and Center-Periphery Dynamics in European Cultural Space," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 1 (25 February 2016): 75–97, doi:10.1353/jhi.2016.0006.

17 Johannes Hendrikus Burgers, "Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 1 (2011): 119–140.

18 Maria Björkman, *Den anfräta stammen: Nils von Hofsten, eugeniken och steriliseringarna 1909–1963*, Pandora-serien xviii (Lund: Arkiv förlag, 2011); Gunnar Broberg, "Scandinavia: An Introduction," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland*, ed. Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 1–8; Nicola Karcher, "Schirmorganisation der Nordischen Bewegung: Der Nordische Ring und seine Repräsentanten in Norwegen," *Nordeuropaforum* 1, no. 19 (13 July 2009): 7–36, doi:10.18452/7996; Mattias Tydén, *Från politik till praktik: de svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975*, 2nd ed., Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm studies in history 63 (Stockholm: Södertälje, 2002); Merle Weßel, "Concept of 'Nordic Race' in German and Nordic Racial-Theoretical Research in the 1920s," *Nordeuropaforum*, 2016, 29–49; Hans-Jürgen Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1971).

Nordic race and the impact of this on civilisation, the conceptualisation of the Nordic race differed, geographically and conceptually, across the Atlantic Ocean. In the third part, I focus on the transnational transfer of knowledge and discourse about the Nordic race. I discuss whether this undertaking can be considered a transnational movement in the rhetorical uses of Nordicness and what aims and effects were connected within the different strains. I show that Germany was a centre for research about the Nordic race, since Grant and Lundborg had extensive connections to German race scientists although no direct link between Grant and Lundborg themselves can be detected.

Scientific Racism in the United States

The idea of a hierarchy of human races was not invented by Grant or Stoddard. Charles Darwin argued in his evolutionary theory that no race was superior to the others. In the decades after the publication of his work, however, the French writer Arthur de Gobineau, the American economist William Ripley, and the British philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer, among others, contributed to the idea that evolution was indeed the struggle between the races. This thinking grew into the ideology of scientific racism.

Whereas Darwin argued against the supremacy of the Northern races and argued that environment had no effect on genes, de Gobineau argued that in Northern parts of Europe there developed a superior race due to its context of a harsh climate. They suggested that civilisation was a product of race and that the Nordic race produced the highest form of civilisation. They also argued that race, not nation or political order, was the foundation for social order.¹⁹ While the late nineteenth-century, racial theorists, such as William Ripley, had focused mainly on anthropological issues in the context of race, racial theorists such as Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard introduced social and political ideas into the discussion. In this way, they turned racial discourse away from anthropology and biology and towards social and political discourse.

Grant was born in 1865 into a wealthy, upper-class family in New York. He studied at Yale University as an undergraduate and received a law degree from Columbia University in 1890. Yet, his legal career was short-lived as he pursued his interests in zoology, genealogy, and anthropology.²⁰ Grant developed a spe-

¹⁹ Jackson and Weidman, "The Origins of Scientific Racism," 66.

²⁰ Charles C. Alexander, "Prophet of American Racism: Madison Grant and the Nordic Myth," *Phylon* (1960-) 23, no. 1 (1962): 73–74, doi:10.2307/274146.

cial interest in the conservation of American wildlife. He was member of the prestigious Boone and Crocket Club, a conservation and hunting club with other prominent members, such as future president Theodore Roosevelt. He shaped various other nature-focused associations, like the National Parks Association and the New York Zoological Society, and he was a founder of the Bronx Zoo in New York in 1899.²¹ Furthermore, he was vice-president of the Immigration Restriction League and member of the Eugenics Research Association. His ideas influenced the drafting of the Johnson Immigration Act of 1924, which regulated immigration to the United States on racial grounds.²² On top of this, Grant published numerous articles about wildlife conservation, nature, and anthropology, as well as the danger of the downfall of civilisation in Europe and its threat to society in the United States. He was a strong advocate for eugenics and placed himself in the popular discourse about degeneration and the decline of civilisation.²³

Grant created a group of followers during his active years. One of his most vocal protégées was the journalist and historian Lothrop Stoddard. In his biography of Grant, Jonathan Spiro calls Stoddard the second most influential racist of the United States.²⁴ His background was similar to Grant's. Stoddard came from an old and wealthy New England family and he also trained, like Grant, as a lawyer but never actually practised law. He studied history at Harvard University and worked as a journalist and an author. Stoddard was considered the apostle of Grant, who was considered the prophet of scientific racism.²⁵ He published 22 books and numerous articles, the most significant of which were *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (1920), *The Revolt against Civilisation* (1922) and *The Racial Realities in Europe* (1924).²⁶ The central theme, following Grant, was the supremacy of the Nordic race, its contribution to civilisation and its feared downfall in the near future. Stoddard was well known in intellectual circles and influenced the intellectuals and authors of his time. The writer F. Scott Fitzgerald alluded to Stoddard and his works in his book *The Great Gatsby* (1925), where his character Tom Buchanan refers to a book on the subject.

21 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 75.

22 Alexander, "Prophet of American Racism," 75.

23 Alexander, "Prophet of American Racism," 89.

24 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 171.

25 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 173.

26 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*; Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the under Man* (New York: Scribner, 1922); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Racial Realities in Europe*.

“Civilization’s going to pieces,” broke out Tom violently. “I’ve gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by this man Goddard? [...] It’s a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don’t look out the white race will be – will be utterly submerged. It’s all scientific stuff; it’s been proved. [...] This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It’s up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things. [...] This idea is that we’re Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and [...] we’ve produced all the things that go to make civilization – oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?”²⁷

The casual allusion to Stoddard’s book and the topic of the presumed downfall of civilisation in a popular novel show that scientific ideas about race were not marginalised but that the discourse about races and civilisation was very much part of intellectual discussions. Books by Stoddard and others were widely read and became so well known that they appeared in literature as part of the zeitgeist.

However, the careers of both Grant and Stoddard were short lived, peaking in the time after the Great War in the 1920s. Yet both left behind extensive material that enlightens us about the conceptualisation of the Nordic race in the United States in the interwar period. Grant’s book *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916/1936) was dedicated to the history of the Nordic race and its achievements, but also prophesied its downfall in the next decades. In the preface to the second edition, the US-anthropologist Henry Fairfield Osborn stated that recent history had shown that the Nordic race was the race that countries needed to rely on for leadership.²⁸ In the preface to the first edition Osborn stated: “if I were asked: What is the greatest danger which threatens the American republic today? I would certainly reply: The gradual dying out among our people of those hereditary traits through which the principles of our religious, political and social foundations were laid down and their insidious replacement by traits of less noble character.”²⁹ The strong interest in the Nordic race and Nordic supremacy started shortly before the Great War and increased significantly in the interwar period. The political and social changes that came with the experience of the war, not only in the United States but also in Germany, were shaped by a sense of loss of the world as it had been known and the subsequent uncertainty of the future.

Grant emphasised repeatedly in his works that he objected to the classification of some races as superior to others, but at the same time he contradicted his statement by declaring that the human races were not equal and alike.³⁰ In his

27 Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14.

28 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, xi.

29 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, ix.

30 Madison Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent* (New York: C. Scribner, 1933), ix.

books, he discussed the races of the world and especially the three races he defined as European races: the Nordic, the Alpine, and the Mediterranean. Here my focus is on the conceptualization of the Nordic race. Grant's description of the physical characteristics of the Nordic race was no different to descriptions by other international racial theorists, such as Fischer, Lenz, or Lundborg. The members of the Nordic race were long-skulled with fair skin, blond or brown hair, and light-coloured eyes. He described them as "a race of soldiers, sailors, adventurers and explorers, but above all, of rulers, organizers and aristocrats in sharp contrast of the essentially peasant and democratic character of the Alpines. The Nordic race is domineering, individualistic, self-reliant and jealous of their personal freedom both in political and religious systems and as a result they are usually Protestant."³¹

Grant argued that the superiority of the Nordic race was defined by its environment. He demarcated the core area of the Nordic race as the areas surrounding the North and Baltic seas, though this area was not fixed but changed over time.³² He supported the neo-Malthusian notion that the environment influenced genes and that genes changed due to environmental circumstances over time and generations. Grant argued that the harsh living conditions of the North – the long winters, the lack of daylight, and the bad weather – had a positive influence on people of the Nordic race, even though the weather was endured rather than enjoyed.³³ The fair environment of Southern Europe where the Mediterranean race was dominant did not force the people to strive for survival. Grant stated that good weather made people mentally and physically weak.³⁴

Grant created a complex network of the human race structure. On top were the three main species: the Caucasians, the Mongols, and the "Negroids". Secondly, he divided them into subspecies or races. The Caucasians, for example, were divided into Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean – the three European races. Thirdly, Grant introduced varieties. Here, the Nordic race was split into Teutonics, Scandinavians, and other varieties based on the region they inhabited. The Teutonics, for example, were based in Great Britain and Northern Germany, and the Scandinavians in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the coastal area of Finland.³⁵ Sweden was considered by Grant the core area of the Nordic race, where the purest types could be found. In Germany or Great Britain, the Nordic

³¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 228.

³² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 20.

³³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 38.

³⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 38–39.

³⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 65–66; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 96.

race mixed with other races but the high percentage of Nordic blood within the people ensured their high quality.³⁶

Stoddard echoed in many ways the thoughts of his mentor Grant and contributed little new to racial theories of the early twentieth century. He also divided European races into Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. He located the areas of settlement the same way Grant did and followed Grant and most other racial theorists of his time in the physical description of the Nordic race.³⁷ Stoddard argued that the terms *Aryan*, *Indo-European*, and *Germanic* were to be considered purely linguistic. Only *Nordic* could be considered a term that defined the racial uniqueness and superiority of the group of people living in Northern Europe and belonging to the Nordic race, according to Stoddard.³⁸ Here Ripley's terminology of the Teutonic race clearly shifts to Grant and Stoddard's Nordic race.

The term *Caucasian*, according to Grant, was used to distinguish White from Black people in the United States but could not be used in other contexts.³⁹ *Teutonic*, as Grant claimed, was also a linguistic term that distinguished the latecomers of the Nordic race from the early Celtic-speaking Nordic tribes.⁴⁰ Grant and Stoddard agreed that all other terms previously used to describe the Nordic race, such as *Aryan*, *Germanic*, or *Teutonic*, actually referred to linguistic differences but not to racial differences – physical and mental traits. Grant stated:

Just as the classification of man according to race needs revision in the light of recent discoveries, so the definition of race must be understood anew in the light of genetics. Thirty years ago, we talked glibly about the Aryan or Indo-European race, or the Caucasian or Germanic race. All these terms must be discarded. Aryan, Indo-European, and Germanic are only linguistic terms and Caucasian has no meaning except as used in America to distinguish between whites and colored.⁴¹

Yet, Stoddard started to use the term “White race,” which comprised the Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean races. Grant was not convinced at this time that these three races could be grouped together but Stoddard considered them all to be races of “good” stock and genetically at least above the “colored races” [sic]. Nevertheless, Stoddard agreed with Grant that the Nordic race was the most val-

³⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, 68, 169, 211.

³⁷ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 5–7.

³⁸ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 162.

³⁹ Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent*, 21–22.

⁴⁰ Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent*, 43.

⁴¹ Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent*, 21–22.

uable one.⁴² While people from the Nordic countries had not previously been considered White, Stoddard connected Nordicness to Whiteness.⁴³

The fear for the future of the Nordic race was a central theme for Stoddard. Whereas Grant had already anticipated a grim future for the Nordic race, Stoddard argued that “it is the Nordics who are most affected by the dysgenic [sic] aspects of our civilization.”⁴⁴ He gave two examples of the decline of the Nordic race. With the first he directed the view to the United States. Stoddard argued that “our country, originally settled almost exclusively by Nordics, was toward the close of the nineteenth century invaded by hordes of immigrant Alpines and Mediterraneans, not to mention Asiatic elements like Levantines and Jews.”⁴⁵ Stoddard refers to “Nordics” here because in his mind the first settlers in America came exclusively from countries with a high concentration of the Nordic bloodline, such as Great Britain, parts of Germany, and Sweden. He continued: “as a result, the Nordic native American has been crowded out with amazing rapidity by these swarming, prolific aliens, and after two short generations he has in many of our urban areas become almost extinct.”⁴⁶ He drew a direct line between rising social and economic problems in the United States after the turn of the century and the geographical change in the migration structures he appeared to have recognized.

According to Stoddard, following Grant’s argument, the Nordic race was endangered not only in the United States but also in Europe, its area of origin. He claimed that it was mainly the Nordic race that had suffered during the Great War: “the Nordic went forth eagerly to battle, while the more stolid Alpine and, above all, the little brunet Mediterranean either stayed at home or even when at the front showed less fighting spirit, took fewer chances, and oftener saved their skins.”⁴⁷ The Great War thus weakened White solidarity, which have previously been a unifying force.⁴⁸ Stoddard’s line of logic was that in the Great War the White races fought each other and other races were less involved, which meant that mainly members of the White races, in particular

42 Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent*, 157; Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 162–63.

43 Catrin Lundström and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, “Nordic Whiteness: An Introduction,” *Scandinavian Studies* 89, no. 2 (2017): 151, doi:10.5406/scanstud.89.2.0151.

44 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 163.

45 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 165.

46 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 165.

47 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 183.

48 Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 169.

the Nordic race, lost their lives in the war. According to him this affected not only the current generation but also the future ones.⁴⁹

Grant and Stoddard's scientific racism was based on their experiences of change in American culture after the turn of the century and the Great War. They perceived a degeneration of the society and as a result felt that the world they knew was changing. Their concerns about an increase in low quality immigrants – as they perceived them – triggered their interest in race mixtures and trying to preserve the status quo.

Grant and Stoddard, as wealthy, educated men of their time with a strong belief in science, used scientific argumentation to support non-scientific claims regarding hierarchies of human races as determinate of historical developments. It is significant how much influence amateur scientists like Grant and Stoddard could gain in politics and the scientific community. They were even able to influence legislation, for instance, the development of the Johnson Act in 1924. The Nordic race and being Nordic became a main identity marker for these men. They used it to proclaim their superior position in society and ensure the preservation of their power in the United States.

***Nordisk Ras* in Sweden Racial Theory**

Enthusiasts for the Nordic race and racial scientists spanned across the Western world, creating an informal network.⁵⁰ In the early twentieth century, the Nordic race concept was popular in most Western countries. It was frequently used to define hierarchies of people, especially to make distinctions between native inhabitants of a nation and immigrants. The discourse, however, was not the same on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, as we have seen in the previous section, the focus was to protect the nation from immigrants arriving from Europe, in particular Southern Europe, and changing the societal and racial map of the United States. In Europe the discussion was different. The decline of the population quality and the fear of racial degeneration constituted the core of the discourse, but in Sweden, it was not immigration but emigration

⁴⁹ Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, 169, 198.

⁵⁰ Maria Björkman and Sven Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics: The Case of Sweden," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 64, no. 4 (20 December 2010): 379–400, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.2010.0009>.

that was the main concern.⁵¹ In the interwar period in Sweden, racial biologists raised concerns that people of a so-called “high-quality” racial make-up would emigrate, and that so-called “degenerate” people would stay behind.⁵²

Racial research in Sweden was less directed toward external influence and instead was concerned with the internal race structure of the Swedish nation. The Swedish racial biologist and leader of the state institute for racial biology Herman Lundborg published several books analysing the racial characters of the Swedish nation.⁵³ In his more general publications on a theory of race, such as *Rasfrågor i modern belysning* (1919) and *Rasbiologi och rashygien: Nutida kultur- och rasfrågor i etisk belysning* (1922), his focus was primarily on Northern Europe and he did not take the global approach as Grant and Stoddard did.⁵⁴ However, like his US colleagues, Lundborg argued that nations consist of race mixtures. For example, the German nation had traces of the *nordisk ras* but also others. The *nordisk ras*, according to Lundborg, could be found in most races, but in a lower quantity.⁵⁵ Lundborg also highlighted the difference between the terms *race* and *folk*, which had an influence on the use of the word *Nordic* in his work. He argued that a *folk* was a group of people joined by culture and *race* constituted a group of people with shared physical and mental characteristics that were inherited.⁵⁶ For example, the German *folk* included the Nordic race as well as other races and the Nordic race could also be found among Roman or Slavic *folk*.⁵⁷ He argued that every *folk* was actually a mixture of races and never exclusively consisted of one race, but the quantity of *nordisk* traces in a *folk* defined its quality.⁵⁸ The term *nordisk* did not itself have a racist connotation in Lundborg’s racial theory; it was a descriptive term, which did not say much about the quality of the race or create strict hierarchies between races, as in US or German racial research. He was much vaguer in his publications,

51 Hofsten, Nils von, *Ärftlighetslära* (Uppsala: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1919); Herman Lundborg, *Rasfrågor i Modern Belysning* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1919); Broberg, “Scandinavia: An Introduction.”

52 Hofsten, Nils von, *Ärftlighetslära*, 490; Lundborg, *Rasfrågor i Modern Belysning*, 126; Broberg, “Scandinavia: An Introduction,” 3–4.

53 Björkman, *Den anfrätta stammen*; Tydén, *Från politik till praktik*; Maja Hagerman, *Käraste Herman: Rasbiologen Herman Lundborgs gåta* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2015).

54 Herman Lundborg, *Rasbiologi Och Rashygien: Nutida Kultur-Och Rasfrågor i Etisk Belysning* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1922); Lundborg, *Rasfrågor i Modern Belysning*.

55 Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes*, 1.

56 Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes*, 1.

57 Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes*, 1.

58 Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes*, 119.

though more precise about his racist ideas in private.⁵⁹ Since he published his research in German, Swedish, and English, it cannot be clearly stated how the term *nordisk* might differ from *Nordic* and *nordisch* in regard to his American and German colleagues. However, it can be stated that Lundborg used *nordisk* not as a cultural or political term, like Grant did, but as a biological one.

In the context of neo-Malthusian ideas of genetic heritage, Lundborg argued that although the environment influenced physical development – such as body size – not all differences in physical appearances could be related to the environment, as many were attributable to racial differences.⁶⁰ In many ways Lundborg shared Grant's ideas on the influence of the environment on the racial constitution but he indicated a certain conceptual uncertainty about how the environment exactly influenced the development of genes. This may have been due to his scientific education as a biologist, which gave him a deeper understanding of genetics. Since Lundborg was a biologist focusing on Sweden, his research on the *nordisk ras* was strongly influenced by his academic background and by his own studies of the races in Sweden that he mapped extensively in the early twentieth century. Direct contact between Grant and Lundborg has not been found. Lundborg's main contacts in the United States were with more established and professional racial scientists, such as Charles Davenport, the leader of the Cold Spring Harbor Eugenics Record Office, and not with amateur scientists like Grant.

Though Lundborg did not have a direct connection with Grant, he had very direct connections with Grant's German colleagues Lenz, Baur, and Fischer as well as racial theorist Hans F.K. Günther who played a leading role in National Socialist racial theory.⁶¹ Günther lived in Sweden in the 1920s and lectured at Lundborg's institute.⁶² The Swedish Racial Biology Institute was modelled after the German Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.⁶³ Lundborg is described as a radical conservatist who helped introduce German racial theory to Sweden.⁶⁴ Although his research was influenced by the idea in radical German racial theory that the Nordic race sits at the top of a racial hierarchy, it was also influenced by theories from scholars in the Nordic region. In that sense, *nordisk* had a double meaning in race science in Sweden. It constituted the research subject but also the context in which the research took place. Nordic scholars cooperated in their efforts in

59 Björkman, *Den anfrätta stammen*; Björkman and Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics."

60 Lundborg, *Rassenkunde des schwedischen Volkes*, 1.

61 Björkman, *Den anfrätta stammen*; Hagerman, *Käraste Herman*.

62 Björkman and Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics."

63 Björkman and Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics."

64 Björkman and Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics."

racial research and shared their ideas in meetings and conferences within a closed network.⁶⁵

Grant and Stoddard's Connections to Germany

Grant did have extensive and direct contacts to German racial theorists, especially to Eugen Fischer, the German medical doctor, anthropologist, and racial hygienist, who studied race mixtures in the German colonies in Africa. In 1937, Fischer wrote the foreword to the German translation of *Conquest of the Continent*.⁶⁶ The arguments of Fischer, Baur, and Lenz harmonised with those of Grant. They praised the physical, mental, and social superiority of the *nordische Rasse*, which according to them made representatives of the *nordische Rasse* leaders of civilisation and the world. Fischer, Baur, and Lenz were not as conceptually clear with their terms as Grant and Stoddard but used both *germanisch* and *nordisch*. Lenz argued that “die Germanenreiche, welche aus der sogenannten Völkerwanderung hervorgingen, wurden gegründet von Stämmen nordischer Rasse. Das deutsche Kaiserreich des Mittelalters ruhte ganz und gar auf den Schultern von Germanen.”⁶⁷ The interchangeable use of *germanisch* and *nordisch* could be because Germany was not part of the core area of the Nordic race, which was mostly located in Sweden. However, the German racial scientists wanted to ensure that Germans could be considered Nordic, so they expanded the historical core area of the Nordic race to the Germanic Reich of the Middle Ages and claimed *germanisch* as a prehistoric term for *nordisch*. Similarly to Grant and Stoddard, Lenz surveyed European history proclaiming any major historical event, such as the Reformation or the Renaissance, to be an achievement made through the contribution of the members of the *nordische Rasse*.⁶⁸ He also agreed with Grant and Stoddard that *Aryan* was not a term to describe the *nordische Rasse* but had to be considered a linguistic term. He concluded that it was not an exaggeration to state that the countries of north-western Europe had the most developed civilisation due to the high concentration of the *nordische Rasse*, since the *nordische Rasse* was the most intelligent race.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Björkman and Widmalm, “Selling Eugenics.”

⁶⁶ Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 359.

⁶⁷ Fritz Lenz, “Die seelischen Unterschiede der großen Rassen,” in *Menschliche Erbliehre Und Rassenhygiene*, ed. Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz (Munich: J.F. Lehmann, 1931), 541.

⁶⁸ Lenz, “Die seelischen Unterschiede der großen Rassen,” 542.

⁶⁹ Lenz, “Die seelischen Unterschiede der großen Rassen,” 542.

In Germany, Grant's second important contact was the philologist and racial theorist Hans F.K. Günther, who was a Nordic enthusiast and a member of the *Nordische Bewegung*. This was a network of German race and 'folkish' (*völkische*)⁷⁰ enthusiasts that included several general organisations such as *Nordischer Ring* and *völkische* youth organizations such as *Jungnordischer Bund* or *Artamanen*.⁷¹ Later, Günther was the leading Nordic expert of the National Socialists and a close friend of Adolf Hitler. He cited Grant frequently in his publications.⁷² Herman Lundborg was also in touch with Günther, who visited Uppsala and Lundborg's racial institute in 1923.⁷³

Grant's ideas were met with great enthusiasm in Germany from the time of the Weimar Republic onwards. *The Passing of the Great Race* was translated by the Austrian professor Rudolf Pollard with the title *Der Untergang der großen Rasse* (1929), who concluded that the book should be a warning to the German people. Stoddard, too, did not shy away from being in contact with the German National Socialists and even visited Germany in 1940.⁷⁴

Germany was a meeting point for racial scientists. In the Weimar Republic and especially later under the National Socialists, Germany became central for people interested in the Nordic race and concerned with its condition. The overlap between the ideas of Grant and Stoddard and those of their colleagues in Northern Europe was significant. It might not be too far-fetched even to suggest a global interest in the Nordic race with certain differences occurring between networks of scholars. The intellectual intersections between Grant and Stoddard and their German colleagues were, however, far more direct. Fischer, Lenz, and Baur made, in many ways, the same claims as Grant and Stoddard about Nordic intellectual superiority. It can be assumed they were more influenced by Grant and Stoddard than the other way around, because Grant's books were published in Germany in the 1920s. Nevertheless, Fischer, Lenz, and Baur were not as conceptually clear as Grant and Stoddard. They used *nordisch* and *germanisch* as interchangeable terms, on the basis that *Germanen* had originated in the *nordische*

70 *Völkisch*, was often used by racial theorists and within racist movements, especially National Socialism, to define their own racial superiority.

71 Karcher, 'Schirmorganisation der Nordischen Bewegung'; Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940*, 55.

72 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 359.

73 Hagerman, *Käraste Herman*; Gunnar Broberg and Mattias Tydén, "Eugenics in Sweden: Efficient Care," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 90.

74 Burgers, "Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology," 139–140.

Rasse.⁷⁵ For them, the term *Germanen* referred to a population that was part of the *nordische Rasse* in the Middle Ages. They all agreed however that *Aryan* was only a linguistic term and that the Aryan race had died out a very long time ago. Conversely, Stoddard and Grant especially, argued that *Nordic* was the correct term rather than the obsolete term *Germanic*.

Transnational Movement of Nordic Enthusiasts?

Following on from the previous section, a question arises whether rising interest in the Nordic race as a key feature to conceptualising civilisation and superiority in the United States and Northern Europe can be considered a transnational movement. Before this question is answered two points need to be discussed: firstly, why the term “Nordic” [*nordisch/nordisk*] became so popular in scientific discourse; and secondly, how it could later enter social and political discourse and influence legislation like the Johnson Act in the United States or the German race laws in 1933.

In the context of the United States, Matthew Guterl argues that a Nordic movement was used after the Great War to try to solve many political problems.⁷⁶ He argues that a Nordic vogue swept over American popular culture in the 1920s, particularly in New York.⁷⁷ Leading authors of the time like Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, and, as already cited, F. Scott Fitzgerald, showed interest in Nordic subjects and referred to them in their work.⁷⁸ The Nordic vogue also strongly influenced the political sphere. Visual differences between so-called races became more important than before. Whereas in the nineteenth century Irish immigrants were unwanted, now they were able to climb the race ladder due to their Whiteness, while immigrants with darker skin from Southern Europe and Black Americans, with their rising liberation movement, became targets of racism.⁷⁹ Whiteness, together with Nordicness, became a leading force within politics

75 Baur, Fischer, and Lenz, *Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 541.

76 Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 41. I do not think the Nordic trend was limited to the US context. It can also be seen in the Nordic countries with their renewed interest in their region that led to meetings between Nordic scientists and eventually resulted in political and cultural institutions like the Nordic Council. See Björkman and Widmalm, “Selling Eugenics.”

77 Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940*, 42.

78 Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940*, 42.

79 Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940*, 75, 140.

and the two were strongly interconnected. The framing of the Nordic race and Nordic supremacy led to a redefinition of Whiteness.

Although the general interest in the Nordic race and Nordicism was rooted in the ideas of Grantian eugenics, in the interwar period, according to Guterl, it turned into racial fear.⁸⁰ This was then connected to ideas regarding the social worth of individuals, with attendant cultural, social, and political implications. Being Nordic meant being White and Whiteness became an integral part of American popular culture. Class formation and race consciousness worked hand in hand.⁸¹ This connotation was rooted particularly in the Anglo-American scientific race discourse and from there entered the social debates of the early twentieth century – previously, only immigrants from Germany and England were considered to be White in the United States.⁸² People with fairer skin began to be perceived as valuable members of American society, because – according to scientific and political theories of the time – their skin colour guaranteed that they possessed the characteristics of the Nordic race, such as intelligence, bravery, and morality.⁸³ Whiteness and Nordicism were brought together as concepts by racial theorists and biologists to describe the most desirable people of the American nation. Before this connection was made, people from Nordic countries were not labelled as White.⁸⁴

In Germany, a similar strong turn – what could be called a movement – to Nordicism can be observed. In the early twentieth century, several clubs and committees were founded in Germany, for the purpose of advancing the Nordic idea, for example Nordischer Ring/ Deutscher Widerbund, Bogenclub or the Deutscher Bund für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde. These clubs were non-professional and non-scientific but interacted with the community of racial theorists, some of whom, such as Fritz Lenz or Eugen Fischer, were even members.⁸⁵

The greatest difference between the German and the US Nordic movements was, however, their respective eras. The prime era of Nordicism in the United States was in the 1920s, peaking in 1924 with the Johnson Immigration Act. After 1930, interest in the Nordic race and Nordic superiority decreased again. This did not mean that racial segregation was no longer a salient issue, but the focus on Nordicism in the discourse declined and Whiteness became a

⁸⁰ Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940*, 41.

⁸¹ Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940*, 41.

⁸² Catrin Lundström and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, “Nordic Whiteness,” 151–52.

⁸³ Grant, *The Conquest of the Continent*, 165.

⁸⁴ Catrin Lundström and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, “Nordic Whiteness,” 151.

⁸⁵ Merle Weßel, *An Unholy Union? Eugenic Feminism in the Nordic Countries, ca. 1890–1940* (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2018), 34; Karcher, “Schirmorganisation der Nordischen Bewegung,” 11–21.

more crucial category. Furthermore, Grant and Stoddard's prominence decreased dramatically in the 1930s. Grant started to focus more on his work on animals, and for the New York Zoo, before his death in 1937.⁸⁶ Stoddard's presence in New York society also declined at the same time. This might be related to the rise of fascism in Europe and their claim to the Nordic concept, which was not compatible with US democracy. However, as the Nordic movement ended in the United States it was only beginning in Germany. With the rise to power of the National Socialists in 1933, Germany's government and political elite were heavily invested in the concept of the superiority of the *nordische Rasse*. In 1933, the Nordic club *Nordische Gesellschaft* was put under National Socialist leadership. In this way, it was transformed from an independent and open club to an instrument of the right-wing party. The club had a double task: to lead the propaganda on the *nordische Idee* in Germany and to establish and nurture close relationships to other Nordic groups.⁸⁷

The leading Nordic enthusiasts of the 1920s became central figures in National Socialist politics. From 1927 until 1942, Eugen Fischer was the leader of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschlichen Erblehre und Eugenik, which was the state institute for eugenics and racial theory during the Weimar Republic and later.⁸⁸ As rector of the university in Berlin between 1933 and 1934, he facilitated the dismissal of many of the Jewish staff members, though he only became a member of the National Socialist Party in 1940. From 1933 onwards, his colleague Fritz Lenz led the eugenics department of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute. Fischer was an expert adviser for the development of the *Gesetz für die Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses* (1933), and he became a member of the NSDAP in 1937.

In Sweden, the connections between the Nordic idea and racial politics were not as clear. Herman Lundborg retired as leader of the institute for racial biology in 1935. The physician and racial biologist Gunnar Dahlberg became the next leader. In 1934, Sweden implemented legislation that allowed the voluntary sterilization of so-called unfavourable individuals.⁸⁹ Though at first glance the sterilization law in Sweden might have shown similarities with the German laws of 1933 and 1935, the Swedish law did not have an explicit racial background.⁹⁰ It

⁸⁶ Alexander, "Prophet of American Racism," 90.

⁸⁷ Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940*, 62.

⁸⁸ Paul Weindling, "Weimar Eugenics: The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in Social Context," *Annals of Science* 42, no. 3 (1 May 1985): 303–318, doi:10.1080/00033798500200221.

⁸⁹ Tydén, *Från politik till praktik*.

⁹⁰ Tydén, *Från politik till praktik*.

was not based on notions of race as such, especially not on a conceptualization of Nordic supremacy, but it was structurally infused with class, gender and racial bias as part of the population question in the establishment of the welfare state.⁹¹ However, racial repercussions cannot be denied, for example in context of the Sámi people or Travellers.⁹²

Enthusiasm for the Nordic race did not take off in its core country in the same way it did in Germany and the United States. The reasons for this were manifold. From the 1930s onwards, Sweden had a rather stable social democratic government, which steadily modernised the country. The standard of living of the Swedish people increased, and welfare was distributed more equally. Sweden did not see the same political and social issues that were rising in Germany and the United States. Furthermore, the Social Democrats began using the term *Nordic*, resulting in the term being associated with the liberal left. Its political meaning changed with increased usage of terms such as “Nordic democracy” and the “Nordic welfare state.”⁹³ In this way it was not exclusively discussed in racial terms anymore, which made it difficult for right-wing groups and fascists to take over the term, as happened in Germany, for example.

To sum up, Nordicism and Nordic enthusiasm spread in several countries in the 1920s and 1930s, but the results were very different and very much influenced by the political and social environment. In countries like Germany, that had a right-wing government, it would gain social and political ground in the 1930s. More moderate countries like Sweden did not experience a political movement of Nordicism but rather a vital interest. Enthusiasm for Nordicism in the United States was short but intense and far-reaching because the idea was able to gain ground in politics and influence law-making. Despite the Nordic enthusiasts sharing their ideas across borders, it might be an overstatement to suggest it was a transnational movement. In the context of the term “Nordic race,” however, one can trace the emergence of a trend towards degeneration, extremism, and racism that originated in the United States and then spread to Europe.

Conclusion

As prominent and important as they were during their lifetimes, it is remarkable how the legacies of Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, in racial science as

⁹¹ Weßel, *An Unholy Union?*

⁹² Broberg and Tydén, “Eugenics in Sweden: Efficient Care,” 130–33.

⁹³ Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang, *Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2010), doi:10.21435/sfh.17.

well as politics, are forgotten today. Both developed ideas about scientific racism, hierarchies of races, and especially, the supremacy of the Nordic race. These ideas were transformed from scientific constructs to political instruments. Grant and Stoddard contributed significantly to the development of the concept of a Nordic race and its global distribution in the early twentieth century. Neither man was a scientist himself, but both were influential society people who built a bridge between science and society. They popularised the idea that the appearance of people as well as their mental characteristics were based on their race. Most of the ideas Grant and Stoddard proclaimed were not new as such, but Grant especially shaped the term “Nordic race.” This term was later used and developed within the global trend towards Whiteness and racial segregation. The invisibility of Grant and Stoddard’s Nordic race discourse in the United States can mostly be explained by the irrevocably changed political sphere following the events of the Second World War. The discourse never gained large-scale political ground after the Second World War, however it prevails among far-right and fascist movements who romanticise the Third Reich and continue to discuss the Nordic race in the context of White supremacy.

As I have shown, ideas about the superiority of the Nordic race were discussed in several Western countries and across nations.⁹⁴ In the end, it is difficult to estimate who influenced whom because many publications were written and published at the same time. They contain the same ideas and descriptions regarding racial hierarchies and the composition of individual races. However, two conclusions can be made. Firstly, that “Nordic” [*nordisch/nordisk*] was a key term of early twentieth century racial theory and science. Secondly, its spread did not originate in the Nordic countries, but was first made popular in the United States and then spread to Europe.

None of the race theorists seemed to doubt that the Nordic race was the most superior race of all and the guarantee for civilisation and progress. Usually, they counted themselves as members of this race and their negative view of the future of the Nordic race might be linked to an expectation of a grim future of their own position in society. The modernisation of societies, and the rise of new democratic ideals as well as communism and fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, challenged the world as they knew it. Grant considered democracy to be an instrument of the weak and did not agree that everyone should have the same voice in society. For Grant, democracy was the end of civilisation.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Björkman and Widmalm, “Selling Eugenics.”

⁹⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History*, xx, 5–8, 227–30.

The passing of greatness also seemed to be at the core of racial theory in the other countries discussed here. Germany feared the disintegration of its nation after their loss in the First World War. The focus on the *nordische Rasse* was one of the methods of the racial scientists of the Weimar Republic and got picked up in the 1930s by the National Socialists. Racial hierarchy became the method to prove the greatness of the German nation and bring it back to the centre of the world stage. This resulted in the long-term bastardisation of the term *nordisch* in Germany. The connotations of racial supremacy and National Socialism created a problematic connection that put *nordisch* forever in the corner of right-wing politics and fascism. When talking about the Nordic countries, Scandinavia is the term most used in Germany today. The term *Nordische Länder* is basically unknown and rarely used. *Nordisch* has been replaced with *skandinavisch* and has connotations connected to the Nordic welfare state and Nordic lifestyle.

Racial scientists argued that Sweden likewise saw the passing of greatness, as parts of its population vanished through emigration. As small country at the periphery, Sweden always had to fight for its significance in the world. To be at the core of the Nordic discourse and be identified as the core area settled by the Nordic race gave it significance. Additionally, the notion of Sweden as a country in between the political extremes of the time might have proven the point for racial theorists about the great virtue of the members of the Nordic race. However, as discussed, Nordic enthusiasts did not gain support in Sweden in the same way they did in Germany and the United States. Yet that does not mean that in Sweden the term *nordisk* remains free of racist connotations. On the one hand, *nordisk* was used as political term to describe institutions of the region like the Nordic Council, Nordic cultural institutions like Nordiska museet, or political concepts such as the Nordic welfare state. On the other hand, there is today an ongoing battle with right-wing and fascist organizations, such as Nordiska motståndsrörelsen, who try to reclaim the term *nordisk* for racist and White supremacist ideas.

To conclude, the concept of a Nordic race was an international concept based on a glorification of the past and the fear of the future. It was founded on the idea that people identify themselves according to physical appearance and skin colour and that human races can be divided into race hierarchies. The ideas about the Nordic race combined science and politics and brought racial ideas to the forefront of Western societies. Its significance was strongly shaped by national and political circumstances that defined the grounds on which ideas of Nordic supremacy could grow and on which today's extremist movements for White supremacy, like the Nordic resistance movement, still rest.