Language Shift and Changes in Community Structure: A Case Study of Oulu, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT: Immigrant communities are particularly prone to language shift, a process where people stop speaking one language in favour of another, because speakers of minority languages often adopt the majority language over time. This article investigates language shift in the context of economic change at the turn of the 20th century in the Finnish-American community of Oulu, Wisconsin, and situates its history within the broader context of Finnish emigration. Through an analysis of quantitative data from the 1910 and 1920 Census in conjunction with qualitative evidence from local histories, this article shows how this community maintained their language through bilingual practices that helped to shape their identity as they experienced societal shifts that contributed to the gradual increase in English usage by the 1950s.

RÉSUMÉ : Les communautés immigrantes sont particulièrement sujettes à la substitution linguistique, un processus par lequel les personnes cessent de parler une langue en faveur d'une autre, parce que les locuteurs de langues minoritaires adoptent souvent la langue majoritaire au fil du temps. Cet article étudie la substitution linguistique dans le contexte de l'évolution économique au tournant du XXe siècle dans la communauté finno-américaine d'Oulu, au Wisconsin, et situe son histoire dans le contexte plus large de l'émigration finlandaise. Grâce à une analyse de données quantitatives issues de recensements de 1910 et de 1920, et à des données qualitatives tirées d'histoires locales, cet article démontre comment cette communauté a maintenu sa langue grâce à des pratiques bilingues qui ont contribué à façonner son identité, à mesure qu'elle connaissait des changements sociétaux qui ont contribué à l'augmentation progressive de l'usage de l'anglais dans les années 1950.

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Introduction

Immigration is motivated by a variety of factors that range from the personal to the political to the economic. Immigrants to a new nation often seek out others with a similar culture or language in an attempt to maintain a sense of community and identity, often rejoining friends or family who immigrated before them. This "chain migration" characterized Nordic immigration to America, with the height of Swedish and Norwegian immigration tapering off in the mid 1800s while Finnish immigration was still gaining momentum. The town of Oulu, WI, maintains an evident pride in their Finnish heritage over 100 years after its founding, offering an important case study in how Finnish immigrants created community and adapted their language and identity to a new cultural environment.

Language shift is the process by which speakers stop speaking one language and start speaking another. Motivations for this process are not easily explained by sociolinguistic categories such as ethnicity, gender, class, etc. or as drawn by areal lines (Salmons 2005). In this article, I offer a case study in support of theories of language shift as proposed by Frey; Lucht; Salmons (2002, 2005); and Wilkerson and Salmons that language shift is ultimately driven by structural changes within regions, and specifically the process of 'verticalization,' or shifts of social and economic control from the local level to the state and national level.

A "region" is a socially constructed notion of space in which spaces that are relevant to a community shift over time (Salmons 2005). The theory of language shift adopted here builds on notions of region as defined by Paasi:

> Regions and communities are spatially constituted social structures and centres of collective consciousness and sociospatial identities.... [B]elonging to a locality or community is mediated by affiliations with its more fundamental (face-to-face) structures: kinship, friendship, neighborhood, which are constituted in various 'larger scale' institutional practices in which people are involved in their daily routines.
> (241)

Many of these daily, face-to-face interactions are encouraged by community institutions. Oftentimes non-local, national structures do not inspire the same level of social engagement as small-scale community institutions. Language usage is closely related to these notions of local region and social structures, which means that shifts in these regional structures often drive language change within these communities. American communities have undergone drastic restructuring from local to non-local structures since the mid-1800s. Warren describes this change as a shift from horizontal (local, social) organizations to vertical ones

(greater regional or national structures). Theories of language shift as developed by Frey; Lucht; Salmons (2002, 2005); and Wilkerson and Salmons apply Warren's model of verticalization and restructuring of communities to explain patterns of language shift in minority language speaking communities across North America. This article examines linguistic shift in the context of economic change in the town of Oulu, showing how quantitative and qualitative evidence from census data and local histories offer a systematic approach to analyzing linguistic and societal change. This is a case study of one community that exists within a greater Finnish-American linguistic and cultural network and whenever possible I nod to this broader context, but more research is needed to give a more comprehensive analysis of language shift in other Finnish-American communities.

Finnish Immigration

The acts and policies that promoted Finnish immigration to Sweden and Norway in the 1600s and 1700s were slowly discontinued by the mid-to-late-19th century by the closing of borders between Norway and Finland in 1852 and Sweden and Finland in 1889. Later acts in Norway (1902) restricted land sales to those who spoke Norwegian at home as a part of nationalization efforts. These restrictions on immigration to Norway and Sweden prompted many Finns to immigrate to America instead, and even many Finns who first immigrated to Sweden and Norway later immigrated to North America as a result of recruiting by immigration agents, who marketed America as ripe with economic opportunities in farming, mining, and lumbering. The first immigrants with Finnish heritage came to the New Sweden colony in present-day Delaware in 1638, however the first major wave of immigration from Finland did not come until the 1860s, with the creation of permanent settlements by Finnish-speaking immigrants. This surge was prompted by a labour shortage in the mines of the Upper Midwest caused by the American Civil War (Kostiainen 29; Kaups 57). Many leaving Finland were farmers and labourers, and they understandably continued to work in these professions after their arrival in America. Over 300,000 Finns immigrated to America between 1864 and 1920, with the greatest surge in the late 1890s and early 1900s (Knipping 10). This surge came as immigration from other European countries was slowing down: the height of Swedish and Norwegian immigration to America occurred over fifty years earlier in the early-to-mid 1800s. Most early Finnish immigrants, especially those who arrived in the 1900s, were single men. Over 60% of Finnish immigrant men were classified as manual labourers (Knipping 12). Many came with the goal of using their experience in agriculture and the lumber industry to establish their own farms and work seasonally as loggers in winter. Many, however, were forced to work as labourers in order to save enough money to purchase a farm. Thus, many of these men were drawn to the iron and copper mines in Minnesota and Michigan, though a number

of them also worked in lumberyards and on railroads. While many immigrant men went to work in manual labour, immigrant women from Finland often worked on farms or as domestic labourers.

A combination of factors pushed many Finns to leave when they did, namely an immense population boom in the second half of the 19th century that left little opportunity to own land and created greater competition for jobs in the cities. Famine years in the 1860s and problems with the sharecropping system further created food insecurity and shortage. Social unrest between the Swedish-speaking elite and Finnish-speaking peasantry, as well as political upheaval when Russia gained power and later the conscription of Finnish men into the Russian army also pushed many Finns to immigrate. Some of these early Finnish immigrants came from Norway after having left the northern provinces of Finland to work as farmers and fishermen in northern Norway where they met with harsh conditions and little success. Such hardships made Finns singularly receptive to the promises and solicitations of American mining company scouts.

Push factors combined with factors pulling immigrants to America such as rumours of economic opportunity, the perceived egalitarian structure of American society, and the more liberal political scene in the United States. All of these elements motivated many to cross the Atlantic and seek a new life in North America. The majority of these emigrants came from Ostrobothnia and the Northern Ostrobothnia areas in western Finland; over sixty percent of all emigrants who left the country between 1893 and 1920 came from the provinces of Vaasa and Oulu (Hoglund 23). Finns often emigrated to places where their friends and family had already settled or where they had heard of a strong Finnish presence. This allowed for the continuance of some Finnish traditions while other traditions were adapted to suit their new environment.

Finns in Wisconsin

The majority of Finnish immigrants came to America after much of the frontier land made available under the Homestead Act of 1862 had already been settled. Some Finns were able to purchase land that remained in the cutover north woods region of northern Wisconsin. This land was often undesirable and difficult to farm because it lacked the substantive topsoil needed for profitable farming and because it was often littered with stumps that needed to be removed before ploughing was possible. Other Finns went to work in mining and lumber with the ultimate goal of purchasing a piece of land to call their own. Many of the earliest "Finntowns" in Minnesota and Michigan got their start in the 1860s when Finns began permanent settlements. Chain migration then brought friends, relatives, and neighbours of the early settlers to these "Finntowns." Wisconsin's limited mining meant that it did not attract as many Finnish immigrants as Michigan and Minnesota, though many Finns did work in Wisconsin quarries and settled

in the very northern counties of the state. Douglas, Iron, and Bayfield counties, for example, accounted for more than one half of Wisconsin's total Finnish population after 1910 (Knipping 12).

Oulu, WI, is located within Bayfield county, which has the 4th-highest population with Finnish ancestry in the state of Wisconsin according to the 1990 Census, with 5.99% of the population claiming Finnish ancestry (Zaniewski and Rosen 130). The chart below details the population growth of Bayfield county from 1900-1940 and identifies what percentage were foreign-born Finns.

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Foreign-Born Finns in Bayfield County	222	610	707	611	514
Total Population of County	14,392	15,987	17,201	15,006	15,827
Percentage Foreign-Born Finns	1.5%	3.8%	4.1%	4.0%	3.2%

Table 1: Foreign-Born Finns in Bayfield County, (Kolehmainen and Hill 154)

These numbers show that a sizeable portion of the population claimed Finnish heritage and further that the number of Finnish immigrants to Bayfield county grew from 1900-1920. This greater trend throughout the county puts the history and language situation of Oulu, WI, in context, revealing that the Finnish population of Oulu was part of a larger population of Finnish speakers, with new immigrants continuing to arrive throughout the early 20th century. Finns in this county were only a small part of the greater Finnish-American community across the Upper Midwest that extended into northern Minnesota and Michigan.

Finns in Oulu

The town of Oulu, WI, is both typical and atypical of other Finnish settlements in terms of its population and institutions; it has maintained a degree of language preservation in line with other Finnish settlements, but notable in comparison to other Scandinavian immigrant groups. Finnish in-migration to Oulu began with the filing of the first homestead in 1889. Homesteaders worked the land continuously as more settlers came to join until Oulu became its own township in 1904 (Krueger 2004, vi). Most Finnish immigrants to Oulu and to other Upper-Midwestern towns came from North Ostrobothnia, South Ostrobothnia, and from the regions in the southwest around Turku. Oulu, WI, was typical of many Finnish-American settlements with a strong tradition of agriculture, a namesake from the country of origin, and home to a co-op, Finn Hall, and Lutheran church.

Finns organized numerous cultural activities and societies upon their arrival in America. Some of these organizations became increasingly more American over the course of the 20th century, they continuously fostered a sense of community. The first Finnish ethnic organizations were temperance groups who built halls as meeting places starting in the 1880s (Kostiainen 173). While these halls were founded to promote temperance ideals and curtail alcohol consumption, they also served as gathering places for dances and other meetings. These halls were widely appealing because both church Finns and red Finns supported temperance ideals. Red Finns were supporters of the Social Democratic Party and many did not agree with the religious practices and values of the church Finns. These halls therefore became spaces of shared values and heritage, a function unobtainable in some Finnish-American churches. Many Finnish-American temperance societies organized a wide array of cultural activities including gymnastics clubs, musical bands, and choral groups to promote their ideals (Kostiainen 173). These halls proved important for helping Finns to socialize into their new country and some of the social organizations continued even after prohibition had been repealed in the 1930s (Kostiainen 91). Finns in Oulu, WI, also held such dances, where local residents report frequenting the nearby Finn Hall in Iron River during the early 1900s until it was discontinued in 1955.

The key aspect in which Oulu differed from other Finn settlements was its geography. The community of Oulu is and was in Wisconsin rather than in Minnesota or Michigan, where most Finnish settlements were. As already noted, Wisconsin had fewer mines than the iron and copper country of Michigan, which made the primary occupations farming and logging. Many Oulu residents became intimately familiar with Superior and Duluth, in later years even travelling there for work, thus asserting the community's connection to the broader Finnish-American network. Finnish-language newspapers also circulated in the area. One prominent example is the publication *Pelto ja koti*, which ran from 1912-1921 and was issued by the Työmies Publishing Company. *Pelto ja koti* was considered the "best known and largest paper especially for Finnish American farmers and the cooperative movement" (Hoerder and Harzig 224). In addition to its regular newspaper from 1904-1950, the Työmies publishing company also issued several annual magazines, first from Hancock, Michigan, from 1904-1914, and later from Superior, Wisconsin. The paper combined with the east coast *Eteenpäin* in 1950 to create the *Työmies-Eteenpäin*, which ran through to the 1990s. Notable publications include *Amerikan Matti* (running from about 1909-1917) and *Lapatossu* (1911-1921), both radical and humorous magazines. Given this circulation and traffic, the language situation in Oulu is one small part of a larger Upper-Midwestern picture, where varying degrees of Finnish may have been used in these urban centres and influenced language usage in Oulu. The Finnish-American community and Oulu specifically exemplify the "doctrine of first effective settlement," which states that if a group of people settle an area in

sufficient numbers and establish successful community institutions, then they are able to not only sustain their own culture but also absorb newcomers into the cultural community (Zelinsky 13, 76).

The farming town of Oulu would continue to grow, but Oulu's population size would always pale in comparison to the populations of notable Finnish settlements in Michigan and Minnesota like Hancock, Cokato, and Calumet. Many Finnish settlements in Minnesota and Michigan got their start in the 1860s around mining centres and drew far greater numbers of people than the logged-over farmland of Oulu, WI, ever would. At its height in 1920 Oulu had only 1,077 residents, barely half the population of many other Finnish-American settlements of the time (Krueger 2004, 7). While Oulu, WI, had a smaller population than many other Finnish settlements, this is hardly surprising given its rural location compared to the hubs of industry in Wisconsin's border states. Despite its smaller size, Oulu had an extraordinarily high percentage of Finnish-born-and-descended residents, which made it an overwhelmingly Finnish community even in comparison to these larger settlements. Though its population was small, the social institutions and language practices in Oulu, WI, were similar to those of other Finnish-American communities across the Upper Midwest.

Given this background on Finnish immigration and where Oulu, WI, falls in this broader narrative, I now turn to an analysis of census data and the quantitative evidence it adds to this examination of language and community shift. In the following section, I examine census data from 1910 and 1920 to give some basic evidence of linguistic and economic change and what it reveals about language usage in Oulu. I also discuss various limitations of using census data and how they impact the given analyses.

Language Shift and Economic Change as Revealed by Census Data

The 1910 and 1920 Censuses both asked questions that yield limited insights into life and language usage in Wisconsin. The 1910 Census asked each person within a household ten years of age and older if they could speak English and if not, what language was spoken. This gives information only about monolingualism in non-English languages: only those who could not speak English were asked what other languages they could speak. The 1920 Census asked everyone in a household over the age of ten if they could speak English (yes or no) and, of those who had immigrated to America, what their mother tongue was. This question tells about the language knowledge of immigrants to America, but it does not directly answer what languages those born in America might know other than English. I draw on this quantitative data collected in these censuses to examine language usage in Oulu, Wisconsin.

In the 1910 Census, information on the 621 residents in Oulu, WI, reveal that 169 were monolingual Finnish speakers (27.2%). Five of those 169 monolinguals were born in America. Because Finns did not begin immigrating to Wisconsin in significant numbers until the late 1880s, the 1910 Census data may not capture a significant portion of second generation Finns who were born in America. In the 1920 Census, information on 1,077 residents reveal that 344 reported Finnish as their mother tongue (31.9%), none of whom were American born. Twenty-nine reported Swedish as their mother tongue (2.7%), with seven of these Swedish speakers from Finland. This data is displayed in table 2.

	1900	1920
# of residents	621	1077
# of foreign-born Finns	164	344
Percentage of population that were foreign-born Finns	26.4%	31.9%
Percentage of foreign-born Finns that were monolingual Finnish speakers	27.2%	48.9%

Table 2: Oulu Census Data

Between 1910-1920, 36 individuals immigrated to Oulu from abroad, 31 of them from Finland. Thus, in the 1920 Census data, only 1% of participants with Finnish as their mother tongue were newer immigrants from after 1910. From the 1920 data, of the total number of Finns who immigrated, 31 individuals immigrated after 1910 and 20 of the 31 reported not being able to speak English. Thus, in the 1920 Census, 5.8% (20/344) of foreign-born Finns were late immigrants who came post-1910 and could not speak English at the time of the census collection. This means that according to the 1920 Census, 43% of foreign-born Finns in Oulu could not speak English even after having lived in America for at least ten years. The fact that nearly half of immigrants from abroad reported not being able to speak English after living there over a decade reveals that knowing English was by no means a necessity for survival in this community in the early 1900s, and it further suggests a high rate of bilingualism amongst the second generation (United States Census, 1910; United States Census, 1920).

Oulu's economy was similar to many new townships in this region in that it was based on agriculture and the lumber industry, with co-op stores later established to promote local business. According to the Census, the three most common occupations in Oulu in the early 1900s were farming, labouring, and "none." It is important to note that many of those reporting "none" were women who ran the household and often performed a significant portion of the farm work. While six participants in 1920 identified "housework" as their occupation, it is likely many of these homemakers still reported "none" as an occupation,

where "none" was indicated as an occupation for children as well. While there was a wider array of occupations reported in the 1920 Census (about 32 as opposed to 20 in 1910), the same trends persisted: the greatest number of persons reported no occupation, followed by farming, and then some sort of labouring (whether farm labouring or standard labouring) with a significant increase in reports of "farmlabourer" as an occupation between 1910 and 1920. Table 3 lists the most common occupations in Oulu and what percentage of those who claimed that occupation were monolingual Finnish speakers.

	1900		1920	
Farmer	112	56.3%	183	29.5%
Farmlabourer	5	40%	131	4.5%
Labourer	78	38.4%	11	27.3%
None	396	17.6%	691	14.7%
Total # of Residents	621		1077	

Table 3: Most common occupations in Oulu as reported in census data
 # all persons | percentage of occupation that were monolingual Finnish speakers

A significant portion of the Finnish immigrants in Oulu were farmers. 56.3% of farmers in 1910 were monolingual Finnish speakers, and 29.5% of farmers in 1920 were monolingual Finnish speakers. Many Finns also worked as labourers: Finnish speakers accounted for 38.4% of labourers in 1910 and 27.3% of labourers in 1920. This is not unexpected, as most Finns who immigrated at the turn of the 20th century were unskilled workers who had the goal of purchasing their own land to farm and either began farming upon their arrival or laboured in lumberyards or mines. Interestingly, the 1920 Census reveals that a plumber, sawyer, and waitress were reported as Finnish speakers and unable to speak English. This indicates that not only were the more isolated farmers using Finnish but that some tradesmen and those in the service and lumber industries were also able to work in the community without knowledge of English. The fact that there were monolingual speakers of Finnish and English in Oulu suggests there were many bilingual speakers of both English and Finnish who communicated between the groups, especially since some of these monolingual Finnish speakers worked in occupations that required frequent communication with customers (United States Census, 1910; United States Census, 1920). Similar findings of monolingual German workers in service industries have been discovered for German speaking communities in southern Wisconsin (Wilkerson and Salmons).

Co-operative stores were championed by Scandinavian Americans throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, appealing to farmers as a way to avoid the price gouging that often happened at the hands of distributors and retailers. Finnish socialists were greater champions for co-ops than any other group, though

they did not hold a monopoly over them (Dregni 152). Finnish immigrants set up the Co-operative Central Exchange in Superior, Wisconsin, in the 1910s in an effort to extend the buying power to all co-ops in the area. There was disagreement in management of the exchange, with socialists ultimately retaining control. Some socialists saw the co-ops as serving the community rather than a political agenda, which led to both the opening of the exchange to more outsiders and to a decrease in the use of the Finnish language in the larger branches (Dregni 152). As early as 1930 the Cooperative Central Exchange hired its first non-Finnish speaking fieldman, who emphasized that the cooperatives could not continue to grow unless they adopted English as the primary language of the stores (Alanen 121). Finns were stronger champions of co-ops than other Scandinavian-American groups, likely because they provided food to workers during strikes and because they kept prices reasonably low in the rural areas where most Finnish settlements were.

The number of Co-op stores in the cutover and throughout Wisconsin grew rapidly between 1910 and 1930 (Gough 85). Co-op stores served an important role for Oulu's economy. The Oulu Cooperative opened in 1916, and some locals reported that Finnish speakers were available to serve customers all the way until its closing (Krueger 2004, 20). The Oulu Cooperative Creamery was organized in 1910, closed in the 1920s, and reopened in Iron River in 1923 as the Iron River Creamery before merging in 1949 with another creamery, which indicates that by the 1950s milk from Oulu was being shipped out of the community (Krueger 2004, 21). Locals report that the Iron River Co-op had Finnish-speaking employees through the 1950s, a further suggestion that English was not necessary to all business exchanges in and around Oulu. Another business important to the local economy was Oscar Lehto's Corner Store, which operated through the late 1960s. "Along with providing gas and food supplies, it was a popular location for catching the bus to school athletic events" (Krueger 2004, 21). Such sentiments reveal how integral to the community these stores were, not merely as spaces for trade but as gathering places as well. Further discussion on economic shift in the cutover region is addressed later in the discussion on verticalization.

Limitations of Census Data

Using census data to make assumptions about the picture of language use in a community has its limitations, as indicated in Wilkerson and Salmons. First, those who reported a knowledge of English did not necessarily have an advanced competency. The question asked in the 1910 Census, Question 17, was "Can the person speak English? If not, what language does the person speak?" Such a question leaves a lot of room for interpretation, and those who had any understanding or ability in English likely reported that they did indeed speak English, given some of the nativist stigma at the time. Without any more specific

criteria, census takers likely took a person's self-reported language skills at face value. This phrasing makes it likely that rates of monolingualism in a non-English language were underreported since any level of ability in English, even only knowledge of a few phrases, might have been considered "ability to speak English." This underreporting of Old World languages other than English was gradually reversed in more recent census findings as people began to over-report their competence in a native language as ethnicity came to be considered more fashionable and less threatening (Fishman). Thus, in some ways, the census questions can be a better gauge of a community's feelings about their heritage language rather than an accurate reflection on their language usage.

In the 1920 Census, Question 20 asked for the "Person's mother tongue" and question 25 asked "Can the person speak English?" While these questions offer a more complete language assessment than the questions on the 1910 Census, there are failings with these phrasings as well. Firstly, question 20 was only asked of those who immigrated to the United States. Many immigrant families reported at least one monolingual Finnish parent, making it likely that the language of the home was Finnish, and making it quite possible that the children's mother tongue was in fact Finnish as well, though they were born in the United States. Second, the 1920 Census has the same issue as the 1910 Census: there is no clear criteria for ability to "speak English." Because Question 25 was answered with a simple "yes" or "no," the ability to say even a few phrases in English might have warranted a "yes," even if the person did not have an advanced command of the language. Many immigrants likely knew enough English to get by with work or when visiting town but otherwise had limited ability.

Interestingly, the phrasing of questions 20 and 25 on the 1920 Census reveals much about bilingualism in the community. Question 25 was only asked of persons over the age of 10. The fact that this was the criterion—rather than whether or not the person was born in America—reveals that there was a need to assess if children of immigrants were learning English. All of these children reported "yes," but it is quite possible that those children under the age of 10 who had not yet started school may not have had knowledge of English. While many nuances of language usage may not be captured in these census questions, the data still reveals a slowness to learn English among some immigrants from Finland and suggests a strong tradition of bilingualism in the community.

Language Shift in Comparison to Other Finnish-American Communities

The data on language usage in Oulu and a slowness to learn English correlates with records of Finnish communities in Minnesota and Michigan as well. The Finnish communities in Minnesota and Michigan were generally much larger than Oulu, WI, as many were centred around mines. One would thus expect an

even greater degree of language preservation because of a higher concentration of Finns. A study showed that Finnish miners in Minnesota and Michigan became bilingual more slowly than other groups, with 64.2% of Finnish immigrants in copper and iron mining communities in both Michigan and Minnesota becoming bilingual after five to nine years (Loukinen 169). This is similar to data for Oulu, where about 43% of Finnish immigrants remained monolingual as many as ten years after immigration, meaning about 57% became bilingual. Many consider the adoption of English loanwords into Finnish phonology not to be proper Finnish, but rather a mix between Finnish and English, or "Finglish." This use of loanwords and code-switching amongst bilingual speakers is typical in communities experiencing language shift. These processes do not make the Finnish or English any less "correct" like the term "Finglish" sometimes implies, but discussion of these nuances in terminology is outside the scope of this article. Here, I consider speakers of Finnish with English loanwords to be Finnish speakers.

Many communities maintained Finnish language ability in as many as fourth-generation Finnish Americans, as Larmouth observed in interviews he conducted from 1966 to 1971 in rural Minnesota (356). This trend differs drastically from other Scandinavian-American communities. Many Swedish- and Norwegian-American children had some knowledge of the language of their parents, but parents often promoted speaking English, even when they themselves did not speak it well, which led some children to "scorn their parents ... because something old country is always attached to them" (Ager 62). Children raised to believe English is a superior language may have difficulty valuing the immigrant heritage of their parents. Much of this difference between Finnish and other Scandinavian communities can be attributed to the fact that Finns tended to settle in rural communities with other Finns and therefore felt less social pressure to learn English. English was also structurally quite different from what they were familiar with. Finnish, a language of the Finno-Ugric language family, is completely unrelated to English and other Indo-European languages. Many Swedes and Norwegians settled in what would become major towns and had greater need to learn English for trade. English, like Swedish and Norwegian, is a Germanic, Indo-European language and relatively closely related to the Scandinavian languages. Finnish settlements tended to have close ties between urban and rural centres, evidenced by the travelling of many Oulu residents to Duluth and Superior for work (Wargelin). While rural locales can maintain heritage languages by avoiding the influence of vertical institutions, they may also quicken their loss: smaller populations make it more difficult to support organized language maintenance programs or even church services in the minority language, while urban centres with larger concentrations of minority language speakers may be able to sustain them longer when more resources are available. Future study comparing language shift and Finnish usage in urban centres of high Finnish concentration such as Duluth, MN, and Hancock, MI, to the more rural locales

explored here is vital for understanding both how these regional networks have shifted over time and whether urban centres can indeed offer more resources for the preservation of minority languages.

Many communities in northern Minnesota and Michigan were similar to Oulu in how they maintained their Finnish culture and language and raised their children to be bilingual, but already in 1918 a "Speak English Movement" started in some of these rural communities. The "Speak English Movement" discouraged the use of Finnish in the interest of making immigrant families "100% American" (Loukinen 171). Even Finnish-language newspapers such as *Koti-Home* promoted the use of English by publishing articles in both Finnish and English; a 1922 note from the editor described the popular magazine as a tool in "educational Americanization work" ("Ystävillemme" 1). This signalled the start of a gradual shift from using Finnish to using English, and by the 1940s some rural communities had difficulty finding Finnish-speaking pastors. The number of people across the U.S. claiming Finnish-language ability declined by 52% between 1940-1960, according to U.S. Census of Population data (Loukinen 172). Oulu experienced a similar shift. Services at the Oulu Evangelical Lutheran church were more likely to be in Finnish than English until the 1950s and examination of church records reveals mixing between English and Finnish in notes already in the 1930s, which suggests a tradition of bilingualism prior to church services switching to English (Krueger 2004, 3).

The similarities in language shift in rural small towns across the Upper Midwest raises the question of whether this phenomenon is the same in communities across America or if there is a specifically Upper-Midwestern force at work. Jim Leary has argued that the Upper Midwest is a region with its own brands of hybridization in folk music, as seen with the Goose Island Ramblers (2006). He asserts that the Upper Midwest is home to many and diverse ethnic groups who have coexisted and culturally blended for over two hundred years; census results from 1980 indicate that residents in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin were the only states to have over 90 percent of residents indicate a nationality other than "American" (Leary 11). The strong pride in immigrant and Native heritage demonstrated in those responses is indicative of the language preservation seen through communities in the Upper Midwest. It also suggests that the Upper Midwest may have different degrees of language preservation when compared to the rest of the nation. While this question of the uniqueness of language shift in the Upper Midwest cannot be definitively answered by this case study, it is a question worth further consideration.

Verticalization

A strong tradition of Finnish usage persisted in Oulu through the 20th century as evidenced by local histories and accounts by local residents, though an

examination of census data indicates a slight decline in monolingual Finnish speakers between 1910 and 1920. These shifts in favour of learning and using English can be considered one part of a larger societal shift occurring across America, termed verticalization, in which local groups were integrated with those outside of the community and thus experienced a corresponding decline in the "cohesion and autonomy" of the local community (Warren 52). More recent scholarship has used this model in conjunction with sociolinguistic theories to explain language shift in German-speaking communities in Wisconsin (Frey; Lucht; Salmons 2002, 2005; Wilkerson and Salmons) and Cherokee-speaking communities in North Carolina (Frey). These communities did not exist in isolation from neighbouring towns and villages but maintained interaction with other local groups. Verticalization refers to the pressures in the management of schools, post offices, and stores that came with the focusing of power and authority in state and federal governments rather than local ones. Other models of language shift that focus on ideas of language prestige are difficult to trace through any systematic means. Examining evidence of verticalization through both language usage in census data and evidence of the reorientation of the local community to extra-community networks of business and trade yields tangible, quantifiable measures that enable researchers to trace a timeline of language change within a community, including intermediary steps like a growth of bilingualism.

The timeline of verticalization in Oulu in many ways reflects economic shifts in the broader cutover region of northern Wisconsin, as outlined by Gough. The cutover region drew many farmers in 1900 who wanted to continue the tradition of yeoman farming that had been established in the rest of the state. Yeoman farming is a system in which a family was economically independent, owning and working their own land and exchanging work with neighbours (Gough 2-5). However, many farmers and experts did not fully understand the conditions in the cutover, a region where "native peoples [had been] pushed aside [and the] land cutover by commercial timber harvesting ... an infrastructure developed for resource extraction, not agriculture" (Gough 5). Many settlers moved to the region and experienced partial success from 1900-1920, the very same period in which Oulu's population was growing and the decades in which it reached its height. These farmers' successes were largely due to the system of depending on the family for labour while also exchanging work with neighbours. This further helped to foster social cohesion and the development of community institutions such as co-op stores and churches (Gough 5). Today some residents still speak longingly of the sense of togetherness that was held "in the old days" even as late as the 1970s.

The agricultural depression of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s took a toll on the region and both public officials and agricultural experts "were concerned with the high rates of public assistance and municipal fiscal insolvency which characterized the region by the end of the 1930s" (Gough 6).

As a result, policies were implemented in the 1930s in an effort to promote reforestation and tourism and to encourage the relocation of failing farmers. Many experts believed that these policies would "improve the physical environment of the region, and protect economically all of the residents of Wisconsin" (Gough 6). As a result of these policies, outsiders considered the region one where farming should be discouraged, despite the decades of success in some communities. Gough thus concludes that the decline in farming in the cutover region was not entirely due to unfavourable environmental conditions but rather to public policies and limited resources available to farmers, which made it more difficult for yeomen farming to thrive (Gough 231). The economic depression experienced in Oulu and the rest of the cutover region in the mid 1900s is one piece of a greater trend towards the reorientation of local communities to state and national institutions, in this case as mandated by state policies. This reorientation away from reliance on others in the community further promoted a shift towards English in order to better communicate with those further and further outside of the community.

Verticalization is also evidenced by the closing of numerous local co-operative stores of Finnish-American origin across Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin between 1964 and 1973. Alanen notes that these closures were part of a greater trend: many similar stores across the Upper Midwest that sold food, variety, and convenience merchandise closed as well during this period (125). Alanen further notes that while many co-operatives failed in the more urban centres of the Upper Midwest, co-operatives in rural communities in the Western Great Lakes Region were still thriving, perhaps due to "more social cohesiveness, less competition, or a greater manifestation of cooperative spirit" (127). These observations agree with general trends in the verticalization of societies, where rural areas take longer to integrate into the broader society. In Oulu, WI, the local branch of the Iron River Co-op did not close until 1984, and the town's last store closed in 1991 (Krueger 2004, 20). The closing of these stores and the growing numbers of people driving further away for jobs are both parts of this greater, gradual shift away from being locally oriented that started already in the late 1910s, but had gained momentum by the 1960s. This is also seen in the closing of the local Finn Hall in 1955 and in the increase in English usage during church services. At the turn of the 21st century, according to the 2000 Census, only 30 residents out of Oulu's 540 worked in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, or mining industries, a steep decline from a century before and further indication that people increasingly looked outside the community for employment (Krueger 2004, 75). Rural, isolated communities such as Oulu took longer to integrate into greater society than others, both in terms English usage and in maintaining local institutions, and residents can thus offer an important perspective on how language shift and verticalization not only occurred together in this instance but are fundamentally tied together.

While verticalization contributed to shifts in favour of English usage, the Oulu community has retained a strong pride in its Finnish heritage. The new Oulu Cultural and Heritage Center opened in the summer of 2014 with the goals of "showcase[ing] and preserv[ing] over a century of Oulu history" (http://www.ouluculturalcenter.org). The centre includes several renovated structures from the area including two homes of original settlers, a traditional Finnish *savusauna* "smoke sauna," a chicken coop, a co-op building, and a one-room school house. The centre's meeting place is housed in the renovated Pudas house, which served as a gathering place for community and religious activities in the early 1900s before public buildings were constructed (Krueger 2007). The centre hosts a weekly Finnish conversation table and annual summer school day camps for youth. The dedicated work of Oulu residents has created a space for community members to gather and remember their history through the buildings that are currently being renovated and preserved on the property.

A strong history of bilingual practices, evidenced by census data and church records, have perhaps aided in the use of the Oulu's Finnish heritage as a marker of its identity. Finnish flags are still painted on the welcome signs to the community and plaques reading *sisu*, a Finnish characteristic defined by William Holtz in *Gathering the Family* (1997) as "perseverance beyond reason," are available for purchase in the community centre's gift shop (quoted in Lockwood 184). These bilingual practices were complemented by a growing canon of local, Finnish-American traditions such as the community's Juhannus midsummer celebration held annually from 1976 until 1984 with live music and a traditional bonfire and which has been revived in recent years (Krueger 2004, 64-7). The community also celebrated St. Urho's Day in the 1980s, a Finnish-American holiday celebrated in the Upper Midwest—and other parts of North America—on March 16, the day that the legendary St. Urho chased the grasshoppers out of Finland (Krueger 2004, 64-7). The town's Finnish and Finnish-American traditions were also complemented by more typically American pastimes such as the establishment of a community baseball team in the 1930s and a 4-H club organized in 1949 (Krueger 2004, 31-2). As verticalization occurred and businesses gradually left the local area, the residents of Oulu strove to maintain a sense of community rooted in their heritage, suggesting that people consciously shape both their personal and community identity through choices to perform their heritage through language, celebrations, and the creation of monuments and museums.

Conclusion

These trends towards verticalization in Oulu as evidenced by linguistic and economic shift are demonstrated both qualitatively by local histories and quantitatively by census data. This article uses these approaches to systematically account for language change as developed by other scholars in analyzing other

heritage language-speaking communities in Wisconsin (Frey; Lucht; Salmons 2002, 2005; and Wilkerson and Salmons). Oulu, WI, offers a clear case study of how changes in language are driven by patterns of verticalization and in an increasing departure from all things local in favour of stores and institutions outside of the community. Verticalization in Oulu was partially driven by economic depression throughout the cutover region of northern Wisconsin in the mid 1900s and by subsequent state policies that discouraged farming in the area. The process of shift from Finnish to English usage in Oulu has also occurred in other rural and urban Finnish-American communities in the Upper Midwest. Further research into these communities is needed to be able to compare timelines of shift and to examine how differing socioeconomic and regional factors affect the process of language shift.

Census data provides quantitative evidence of language usage in Oulu, WI, and indicates the preservation of Finnish immigrants' native language and suggests a high degree of bilingualism within the community. This growth of bilingualism indicates the beginnings of a shift in favour of English. This language shift and growth of bilingualism supported a change in identity from Finnish to Finnish-American. Furthermore, this quantitative data is corroborated by local histories and interviews with long-time residents of the community discussing the creation and discontinuation of local stores and traditions. A number of heritage speakers of Finnish in Oulu are still alive today, as is evident pride in the town's history and heritage. That Oulu still maintains this pride is a testimony to the Finnish-American identity this community has created and continues to perform despite the effects of verticalization on this community and others across the Upper Midwest.

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