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NATIONAL MILK. GENDER AND FINNISHNESS IN THE MILK PROMOTION STRATEGIES OF THE FINNISH DAIRY NUTRITION COUNCIL

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a significant actor in Finnish milk promotion – the public health organisation ‘Maito ja terveysterveys ry’ (‘Dairy Nutrition Council’), active from 1958 to 2020. It aims to explore the gendered and nationalistic imagery in the Council’s promotional material and to discuss how nationality is intertwined with gendered representations in that context.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, Finland has been among the highest consumers of milk worldwide.¹ Accordingly, dairy husbandry is still considered a cornerstone of Finnish agriculture even though, in more recent times, the number of dairy farms has collapsed and milk-consumption rates have been consistently falling since reaching a peak in the late 1950s.² One reason why milk has been so highly appreciated in Finland may have been the effective way in which it has been promoted for almost one hundred

1 Reference to this study: TAJA Kaarlenkaski: National Milk. Gender and Finnishness in the Milk Promotion Strategies of the Finnish Dairy Nutrition Council. In Anikó Băti and Patricia Lysaght (eds.): *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*. Budapest: ELTE RCH Institute of Ethnology – Museum of Ethnography, 2025. pp. 335–349.

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2 ‘List of Countries by Milk Consumption per Capita, *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_countries_by_milk_consumption_per_capita&oldid=1233498249> accessed 4 December 2024; ‘Milk Consumption by Country 2024’, World Population Review. <<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/milk-consumption-by-country>>; ‘Balance Sheet for Food Commodities 2023, Preliminary and 2022 Final Figures’, Luke, Natural Resources Institute Finland. <<https://www.luke.fi/en/statistics/balance-sheet-for-food-commodities/balance-sheet-for-food-commodities-2023-preliminary-and-2022-final-figures>> accessed 4 December 2024; ‘Finland: Number of Dairy Farms 2022’, Statista. <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/898161/number-dairy-farms-finland/>> accessed 13 December 2024.

years – cow's milk and dairy products have been seen as an integral part of a healthy diet, and the consumption of dairy products has been endorsed by public institutions.³ Thus, it may be assumed that the messages and imagery of milk promotion have been influential in Finnish culture. Commonly, marketing includes gendered characters that are easily recognisable as female or male, and this was, and is, the case also in relation to milk marketing in Finland. Furthermore, appealing to domesticity and nationality has been a typical trope in food marketing in many countries, and, in milk promotion in particular, these attributes have often been highlighted.⁴

In this paper, I shall focus on one significant actor in Finnish milk promotion – the public health organisation 'Maito ja terveys ry' ('Dairy Nutrition Council'). It was established in 1958 and continued in existence until 2020, with the aim of advancing the consumption of milk and milk products. In this context, the Council produced and distributed promotional leaflets, brochures, and posters for different age and gender groups. Moreover, the Council's figurehead, 'Maitotyttö' ('Milk Maid') or 'Maitolähettiläs' ('Milk Ambassador'), promoted milk at public events, and at day-care centres, schools and garrisons.⁵

My particular aim is to explore the gendered and nationalistic imagery that the Dairy Nutrition Council has produced in its promotional materials, and how this imagery has changed over the past sixty years. My main questions are: What kinds of characteristics are related to different genders in Finnish milk promotion; what kinds of assumptions, in terms of milk and milk products, are linked with girls, boys, men and women; and how is nationality intertwined with gendered representations?

3 Kaarlenkaski, Taija: 'Exploring the Roots of High Milk Consumption in Finland', in Syrjämaa, Taina et al. eds.: *Animal Industries: Nordic Perspectives on the Exploitation of Animals since 1860* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 45–62; Vinnari, Markus – Santaoja, Minna and Jokinen, Pekka: 'Institutional Work in Maintaining and Disrupting the Finnish Milk Regime', in Vinnari, Eija and Vinnari, Markus eds.: *Sustainable Governance and Management of Food Systems: Ethical Perspectives* (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2019), 295–300.

4 Ichijo, Atsuko and Ranta, Ronald: *Food, National Identity and Nationalism. From Everyday to Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 61–81; Andersson, Helen: 'Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging: The Case of Sweden', *Discourse, Context & Media* 34 (2020), 1–10. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2019.100329>>; Andersson, Helen: 'Recontextualizing Swedish Nationalism for Commercial Purposes: A Multimodal Analysis of a Milk Marketing Event', *Critical Discourse Studies* 16/5 (2019), 583–603. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2019.1637761>>.

5 For a full-length research article on the topic, in Finnish, see Kaarlenkaski, Taija: 'Kansallinen maito. Sukupuoli ja suomalaisuus Maito ja terveys ry:n maitomarkkinoinnissa' ('National Milk. Gender and Finnishness in the Milk Promotion of The Dairy Nutrition Council'), in Hämäläinen, Niina – Kupiainen, Tarja and Taavetti, Riikka eds.: *Joustavat sukupuolet – Muuntuvat merkitykset* ('Flexible Genders – Changing Meanings') (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2024), 137–166.

As research material, I use the archived documents of the Dairy Nutrition Council. I will discuss both visual and textual representations of gender and nationality that reflect and reproduce the social norms of Finnish society. I understand gender and nationality as being performative in character, produced and reproduced in cultural representations and actions.

EXPLORING FINNISH MILK PROMOTION

After the World War II, Finland experienced problems with public health due to inadequate nutrition. From 1947 to 1951 Finland received food aid for children in poor families from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Moreover, due to the inadequate handling and storage conditions of fresh milk, UNICEF financially supported the acquisition of refrigeration and pasteurisation machines in the Finnish dairies. At the same time, there was public interest in increasing the consumption of milk in many parts of Europe. This was also the case in Finland where several civic organisations expressed their concerns about both the position, and the quality, of milk in nutrition. In 1954, 'Maidon käytön edistämisvaltuuskunta' ('Delegation for the Advancement of Milk Use') was established on the initiative of Finnish temperance organisations. The broader aim, however, was to establish an association for the purposes of milk promotion, but due to a lack of funding, such an organisation – the Dairy Nutrition Council – was not founded until 1958. In continuation to their earlier efforts to improve milk processing in Finland, the Finnish UNICEF committee made an award of a start-up grant, and the committee partly funded the Council for another decade – until 1968.⁶ According to its constitution, the Council sought 'by advancing the use of milk and dairy products to support and develop public health and an abstinent way of life.'⁷ The Council presented itself as a non-commercial civic organisation, and it claimed to provide unbiased information based on official nutritional recommendations.⁸ The members of the Council were dairy companies, along with different public health and housekeeping groups, as well as farmers' organisations. The Council was mainly funded by the member dairies, but it received

6 Packalén, Leena and Urho, Ulla-Marja: *Muista maito: Maito ja terveys ry vuosina 1958–2008* ('Remember Milk: The Dairy Nutrition Council in 1958–2008') (Helsinki: Maito ja terveys, 2008), 6–7; Osman, Hannele: *Kun UNICEF auttoi Suomea 1947–1951* ('When UNICEF helped Finland 1947–1951') (Helsinki: Suomen UNICEF-yhdistys, 1991), 13, 21–63.

7 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Hallinnolliset asiakirjat, Me allekirjoittaneet perustamme 1958. The National Archives of Finland.

8 See, e.g., Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 4; The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Tiedotteet ja lehtikirjoitukset 1970–1992, Maito ja terveys ry 1982. The National Archives of Finland.

grants for campaigns from, for example, the state of Finland, Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY), and the EU.⁹ In 2020, the Dairy Nutrition Council was disbanded and milk promotion was transferred to an organisation called 'Ruokatieto Yhdistys ry' ('Finfood – Finnish Food Information'), which promotes, in general terms, food produced in Finland.¹⁰

From the late 1950s to the end of the 2010s, the Dairy Nutrition Council produced material that permeated Finnish society – from toddlers to pensioners. Promotional leaflets, as well as brochures and posters, about milk and milk products, were distributed in, for example, day care centres, children's health clinics and schools. Moreover, the Council also published promotional press releases, as well as a series of slides and films, and lectures on the topic were given at different events and even broadcasted on national radio and TV channels. Publication-ready articles were sent to newspapers and magazines, and these were widely published as submitted. After the closedown of the Council in 2020, its materials and archives were stored in the National Archives of Finland and are drawn on in this article. In this study, the archival materials used include mainly leaflets and press releases that show the gendered and national meanings linked to milk production and consumption, as well as documents related to the work of the 'Milk Maid' and the 'Milk Ambassador'. The discussion focuses on the period from the beginning of the 1970s – when the Dairy Nutrition Council's promotion literature started to target different age and gender groups – until 2020 when the Council's activities were wound up.

The materials are explored utilising multimodal critical discourse analysis, which discusses texts and images together, as they both participate in meaning-making. In this approach, visual elements are also seen to communicate discourses and social practices. Special attention is paid to verbal and visual choices and the ideologies and power structures that they serve.¹¹ The main focus is on representations of gender and nationalism, which are often intertwined. Nationalism refers to an ideology according to which every nation should have its own nation state. As Michael Billig has suggested, nationalism might manifest itself not only, for example,

9 Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 7, 65.

10 'Ruokatieto Yhdistys ry jatkaa Maito ja Terveys ry:n työtä – ravitsemusaineisto on edelleen tilattavissa', Ruokatieto. <<https://ruokatieto.fi/ruokatieto-yhdistys-ry-jatkaa-maito-ja-terveys-ry-tyota-ravitsemusaineisto-on-edelleen-tilattavissa/>> accessed 5 December 2024.

11 Ledin, Per and Machin, David: *Doing Visual Analysis. From Theory to Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 36–41; Rose, Gillian: *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016), 138–142; Andersson: 'Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging', 3.

in the form of ceremonies on Independence Day, but also as representations and symbols in everyday, banal contexts.¹² Moreover, national narratives tend to imply gendered conceptualisations on the characteristics, places, and tasks that women and men should have in society.¹³

MILK PROMOTION DIRECTED AT GIRLS AND WOMEN

The Dairy Nutrition Council aimed at making milk consumption tempting for both girls and women and boys and men. The Council was especially concerned about the possibility of teenage girls and middle-class women abandoning milk drinking. According to the Council, these groups were interested in dieting and might see milk and dairy products as fattening, and they might, therefore, stop consuming them. It pointed out in its literature that this was not a reasonable concern, because, according to the Council, low-fat dairy products do not cause an increase in weight.¹⁴ In general, dieting was represented as a female ‘problem.’ This was already evident in the Council’s leaflet in 1974, the first one specifically directed at teenage girls, which included a comic strip in which a girl feels tired and weak. It turns out that she has anaemia because she does not have a proper diet and she is trying to lose weight. After she eats food with sufficient amounts of protein, calcium, vitamins and micronutrients, she starts to feel better. Dairy products are here represented as an integral part of a healthy diet and although her weight increases by a couple of kilogrammes, it is stated that this does not matter, because the weight gains are ‘in the right places,’ and she even has a romance with a sporty young man.¹⁵

Similar messages prevailed in leaflets and campaigns directed at girls and young women in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, the 1997 campaign entitled ‘Luonnolliset mitat’ (‘Natural measures’) included a leaflet that emphasised in its introduction that

12 Billig, Michael: *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 4–7.

13 Yuval-Davis, Nira: *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Mayer, Tamar: *Gender Ironies of Nationalism. Sexing the Nation* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1999).

14 In contemporary research, the relationship between low-fat dairy products and weight management has turned out to be somewhat ambiguous, but some findings suggest that consuming non-fat dairy products may be related to lower abdominal adiposity and lower weight. Moreover, low-fat dairy products are recommended in the current Nordic Nutrition Recommendations for health reasons. See Wilkinson, Klarissa R. et al.: ‘Milk-Fat Intake and Differences in Abdominal Adiposity and BMI: Evidence Based on 13,544 Randomly-Selected Adults’, *Nutrients* 13/6 (2021), 1832. <<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13061832>>; ‘Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023’ <<https://pub.norden.org/nord2023-003/>> accessed 21 January 2025.

15 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Esitteet – koululaiset, Mukaan vauhtiin 1974. The National Archives of Finland.

everyone has a unique body shape, and that slight chubbiness is not bad for girls. The booklet also included images of three teenage girls representing different heights and weights. However, they were described as 'suitably slim' and none of them was overweight or even roundish.¹⁶ Although body positivity was not widely discussed until the 2010s, the message of the 1997 campaign seems to be similar to later discussion in this context: on the surface, all kinds of bodies are represented as acceptable. Nevertheless, even though variation in body sizes and shapes were underlined in the text, the imagery foregrounded the ideal of a slender body as being healthy and desirable. Similar contradictory meanings are to be found in contemporary discussions of body positivity.¹⁷

For adult women, the main argument against abandoning dairy products was the threat of osteoporosis, a health condition that causes bones to become weak and fragile, especially for women after the menopause. To prevent osteoporosis, it is important to have sufficient vitamin D and calcium intake from one's nutrition as well as to get enough exercise.¹⁸ The argumentation concerning osteoporosis and calcium intake was similar to that directed at girls – dieting is not necessary, and it may even be harmful, especially if consumption of dairy products is reduced or abandoned completely. Accordingly, milk was represented as the most convenient, if not the only, source of calcium, and it was emphasised that females especially need dairy products in their diet in order to keep their bones in shape.¹⁹ Although dieting was rejected, nevertheless, the imagery of the leaflets consisted mainly of representations of slim female bodies (Fig. 1). Moreover, especially in the 21st century materials, the ideal of slenderness was hidden in phrases, such as 'well-being' and 'healthy lifestyle'. These discourses of welfare and empowerment reflect the new liberal language in which the free choice of the individual is ostensibly emphasised while social norms determine strongly the ideal body.²⁰

16 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. *Esitteet – koululaiset, varusmiehet, maitokannukisa, atk-ohjelmat, Sinähän olet hyvännäköinen: Tytöt ja ruoka 2003*. The National Archives of Finland.

17 Harjunen, Hannele: 'Kehopositiivisuus: radikaalista yhteiskunnallisesta liikkeestä uusliberaalin terveyden tuottajaksi?' ('Body positivity: from radical social movement to producer of new liberal health?'), in Eskelinen, Teppo – Jokinen, Eeva and Rokkonen, Lilli Aini eds.: *Tehostamisyhteiskunnan jäljet* ('Traces of the Efficiency Society'), (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 2023), 35–56.

18 Wiley, Andrea: *Re-Imagining Milk: Cultural and Biological Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 84–86.

19 See Wiley: *Re-Imagining Milk: Cultural and Biological Perspectives*, 69–72.

20 Harjunen: 'Kehopositiivisuus: radikaalista yhteiskunnallisesta liikkeestä uusliberaalin terveyden tuottajaksi?', 42–43.



Fig. 1. The cover of the leaflet 'Pysytään lujina – naiset!' ('Let's stay strong – women!'). (Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys, 2015)

MILK PROMOTION DIRECTED AT BOYS AND MEN

For boys and men, milk was not presented as a solution to a specific health problem, such as osteoporosis. Rather the focus was on healthy eating habits and the meaning of nutrition for muscle formation. The meaning of muscles could be seen, for example, on the covers of the 'Pojat ja ruoka' ('Boys and food') leaflets from 2004 and 2014. In the earlier version, a well-built young man holding a milk glass receives a love letter, whereas a short-stature boy beside him, who is eating fast food, can only look enviously on. In the 2014 edition, a teenage boy is showing off with his bare biceps looking energetic and powerful. The leaflet also included other photos of boys showing their arm muscles, and although these could be interpreted as hyperbolic and humorous, nevertheless, the ideal of a muscular male body becomes clear.²¹ While appearance-related pressures have been widely discussed in relation to female bodies, it has been pointed out that the ideal male body has also been portrayed as being slender and trained, and that many boys and men may have problems with this model.²²

The Dairy Nutrition Council also had campaigns for men. For example, in 2012, it launched a campaign entitled 'Kovat kundit juovat. Maitoa' ('Tough guys drink. Milk') (Fig. 2), directed at men aged between forty-five and sixty-four years of age. The title of the campaign probably referred to the fact that, on average, men drink more alcohol than women, but this stereotype was challenged by the surprising end-of-the-campaign-title that combines toughness and milk drinking. The figurehead of the campaign was Mikko Salo, a fire-fighter foreman and winner of the competition, 'World's fittest man', in 2009. In the campaign poster, he was seen doing press-ups with a milk glass in front of him. As a winner of a competition that requires physical strength and endurance, and working in a managerial capacity in a masculine field, it may be argued that Salo represented stereotypical white, muscular hegemonic masculinity.²³ However, there was also a somewhat 'soft' type of imagery in the campaign leaflet – a photo showing middle-aged men smiling and drinking smoothies, for example. Moreover, a form of well-being discourse, similar to what

21 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Esitteet – koululaiset, varusmiehet, maitokannukisa, atk-ohjelmat, Pojat ja ruoka 2004; Pojat ja ruoka 2014. The National Archives of Finland.

22 Kyrölä, Katariina: 'Ruumis, media ja ruumiinkuvat' ('Body, media and body images'), in Mäkelä, Anna – Puustinen, Liina and Ruoho, Iiris eds.: *Sukupuolishow. Johdatus feministiseen mediatutkimukseen* ('Gender show. Introduction to feminist media studies'), (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2006), 125–126.

23 'Maaillan kovakuntoisin mies löytyy Porista', Yle Uutiset. <<https://yle.fi/a/3-5282520>> accessed 10 December 2024; Gambert, Iselin and Linné, Tobias: 'From Rice Eaters to Soy Boys: Race, Gender, and Tropes of "Plant Food Masculinity"', *Animal Studies Journal* 7/2 (2018), 138–140. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3298467>>.

had been directed at women in the 2000s, was also applied to men. It is of interest to note that while the campaign-leaflet text emphasised listening to one's own feelings and preferences, and while it endorsed moderate changes of lifestyle, the campaign illustration featured an extremely fit figurehead, and the title also underlined the 'toughness' of men. This indicates that both masculine and feminine attributes may be found in modern manhood.

BLUE-AND-WHITE DAIRY MARKETEERS: 'MILK MAIDS' AND 'MILK AMBASSADORS'

From 1973 to 2005, the Dairy Nutrition Council organised a 'Milk Maid' competition. Just once – in 1997 – a 'Milk Boy' was chosen. The tasks of the 'Milk Maid' included, for example, performing at exhibitions, grocery stores, day-care centres, schools and garrisons, and on formal occasions arranged by the Dairy Nutrition Council for the promotion of milk and dairy products. In 2006, the beauty-contest like competitions for the 'Milk Maid' ceased, and the assignment was changed to that of 'Milk Ambassador'. Instead of being a mere figurehead, the 'Milk Ambassador' was a nutrition expert, who was expected to have qualifications in the subject. A candidate for this assignment was sought for by means of a formal job announcement, instead of, as in the case of the 'Milk Maid' competition, by advertisements placed in newspapers, magazines, and on milk cartons.²⁴ In 2019, the assignment was changed to that of 'Milk and Nutrition Expert', and only one person held this position before the Dairy Nutrition Council was closed down in 2020.²⁵

Although the job description and requirements became more professional over time, the uniform of the 'Milk Maid' and the 'Milk Ambassador' remained the same from the late 1970s until 2018. In 1976, fashion designer, Tarja Vuokko, designed 'working clothes' for the 'Milk Maid'. The outfit included a skirt with blue and white stripes, a white shirt, a blue vest, and an embroidered pocket on the hip. According to the Dairy Nutrition Council, the dress resembled 'a traditional peasant festive dress'.²⁶ The outfit was also reminiscent of Finnish national costumes, and, together with a garland, the appearance easily became associated with the 'Finnish Maiden',

24 Packalén and Urho: *Muista maito*, 27–30; The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja Maitolähettiläät 1975–2019, 23. Kansainvälinen Maitopäivä. The National Archives of Finland.

25 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja Maitolähettiläät 1975–2019, Haemme maidon ja ravitsemuksen asiantuntijaa 2019. The National Archives of Finland.

26 The Archives of the Dairy Nutrition Council. Maitotyöt ja -lähettiläät 1975–2019, Maitotyön työn historiaa, undated. The National Archives of Finland.

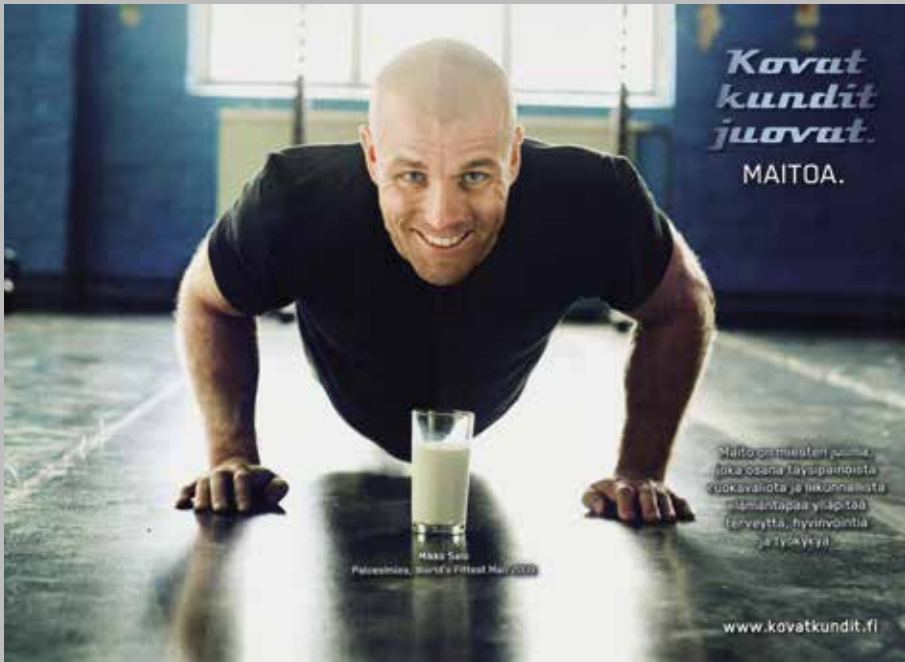


Fig. 2. The poster of the campaign 'Kovat kundit juovat. Maitoa' ('Tough guys drink. Milk'). (Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys, 2012)



Fig. 3. 'Milk Ambassador' 2006–2008, Hanna Haponen, in a promotional photo with a cow. (Photo by Ruokatieto Yhdistys)

the personification of Finland, that dates to the late 19th century; and it was probably not a coincidence that the dress had the same colours as the Finnish national flag. From the late 19th century, the figure of a young woman in folk dress was used to symbolise Finnish national identity, which was threatened under Russian rule. A visual representation of the ‘Finnish Maiden’ dressed in a vertically-striped skirt and a dark vest, became an established illustration in the Finnish press in the 1920s and 1930s when Finland was already independent, and it has been a well-known Finnish national symbol ever since.²⁷ The ‘Milk Boy’ also posed in a blue and white outfit – a blue shirt with a white knitted sweater on his shoulders – in the promotional photo.

In promotional photos, the ‘Milk Maids’ and the ‘Milk Ambassadors’ often posed under birch trees or in other kinds of ‘natural’ environments, and sometimes even with cows (Fig. 3). The environment emphasised the naturalness and freshness associated with the ‘Milk Maid’, and, at the same time, these characteristics expanded to include images related to milk. In the marketing of dairy products, national nature imagery and the countryside have been utilised in several countries.²⁸ Furthermore, the cow has become a symbol of milk and the countryside, and it has been argued that the image of the cow has been fetishised in the marketing of dairy products: it induces ideas of authentic and pure agrarian culture, which may never have existed in reality.²⁹ Regarding ‘Milk Maids’ and ‘Milk Ambassadors’, their task was to embody health, naturalness, Finnishness, and the countryside, in a self-evident, banal way.

CONCLUSION

The Dairy Nutrition Council may be seen as an influential element of Finnish nutrition marketing, as its materials were distributed widely through public

27 Reitala, Aimo: *Suomi-neito. Suomen kuvallisen henkilöitymän vaiheet* (‘Finnish Maiden. The Phases of Visual Personification of Finland’) (Helsinki: Otava, 1983), 86–92, 133–135; Valenius, Johanna: *Undressing the Maid. Gender, Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004), 17–33.

28 Hakoköngäs, Eemeli and Sakki, Inari: ‘The Past as a Means of Persuasion: Visual Political Rhetoric in Finnish Dairy Product Advertising’, *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7/1 (2019), 514–517. <<https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.v7i1.1107>>; Andersson, ‘Nature, Nationalism and Neoliberalism on Food Packaging’, 4–5.

29 Jönsson, Håkan: *Mjök: En kulturanalys av mejeridiskens nya ekonomi* (‘Milk: A Cultural Analysis of the Dairy Counter’s New Economy’) (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2005), 79; Molloy, Claire: *Popular Media and Animals* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 115; Linné, Tobias and Pedersen, Helena: ‘With Care for Cows and a Love for Milk. Affect and Performance in Swedish Dairy Industry Marketing Strategies’, in Potts, Annie ed.: *Meat Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 118.

institutions, thus reaching large audiences. The world of the Council's leaflets and posters may be seen as being heteronormative, Finnish, white, and middle-class. Only white, 'Finnish-looking' people, appeared in the images in the publicity material, although Finland has become more international in outlook, at least in the 21st century. This promotional material, therefore, excluded different ethnicities and sexual minorities, as if milk drinking – and Finnishness – did not belong to them.³⁰ In the materials, the ways in which different genders were represented were rather stereotypical, although the imagery used in this context started to become more diverse in the 21st century. Moreover, the relationship to being overweight, as presented in the Council's promotional literature, seemed to be contradictory. On the one hand, it was claimed that 'all types of bodies are acceptable', and dieting was rejected, especially if that meant abandoning the consumption of dairy products. On the other hand, the Council gave tips on weight management, and the leaflets and posters showed images of slender and muscular bodies. Thus, it may be argued that the Council reproduced the ideal of slimness in their materials.³¹ Furthermore, although one 'Milk Boy' was chosen in the history of the Dairy Nutrition Council, the qualities of milk were mainly embodied by attractive, stereotypically feminine appearances in the figure of the 'Milk Maid' and 'Milk Ambassador'. This figurehead represented naturalness, health, purity, the countryside, and Finnishness. These unspoken and self-evident characteristics demonstrated that by drinking milk, not only health, but also an ideal Finnishness, is constructed and maintained.

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30 See Yuval-Davis: *Gender & Nation*, 71; Hoegaerts, Josephine et al.: 'Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality: An Introduction', in Hoegaerts, Josephine et al. eds.: *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2022), 1–17.

31 See Harjunen: 'Kehopositivisuus: radikaalista yhteiskunnallisesta liikkeestä uusliberaalin terveyden tuottajaksi?', 51–52.

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