

THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE BY ANU PARTANEN PDF

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Review

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"...meticulously researched. [Partanen] offers a clear, informative, fact-filled survey of the differences between American and Nordic childcare, health care, education, elder care and taxation arrangements. It could be a game-changer in national conversations about the roles that governments should play in their citizens' lives." (Seattle Times)

"An engaging fusion of reportage and memoir." (O, the Oprah Magazine)

"This is a wonderful, hopeful book about what American society can be-not by adopting Nordic 'socialism,' but by embracing the values that have allowed Nordic citizens to enjoy more freedom and quality than in present-day America. The American Dream was once an inspiration to the world. Anu Partanen shows us how to rediscover it." (Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at University of California, Berkeley, and former U.S. Secretary of Labor)

"If Americans really understood how bad we have it-how unjust and wrong headed our child care, education, and public health policies are-we'd take to the streets. Anu Partanen rips up the stale stereotypes about Nordic welfare states and shows us all the kinds of human flourishing we're missing out on.This is a dangerous book. Don't let it fall into the wrong hands." (Judith Shulevitz, author of *The Sabbath World*)

"In this election year, Partanen's sensible book should be required reading for those who wonder why so many Americans feel resentful and alienated." (Foreign Affairs)

"A passionate and intelligent argument." (Publishers Weekly)

"In her careful, evenhanded series of thoughtful essays, Partanen, who just became an American citizen, parses the recipe for Nordic success that even the self-congratulatory 'exceptional' American may want to ponder and adapt. . . . An earnest, well-written work worth heeding, especially in our current toxic political climate." (Kirkus Reviews)

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Anu Partanen, however, had recently left Finland and moved to America for the love of her life, a man who would ultimately become her husband. Their relationship flourished, but she found that navigating the basics of everyday life—from health insurance and taxes to education and child care—was much more complicated and stressful than anything she had encountered in her homeland. At first she attributed her crippling anxiety to the difficulty of adapting to a freewheeling new culture. But as she got to know Americans better, she discovered that they shared her deep apprehensions. To understand why life in Finland is so drastically different from the way things are in the United States, Partanen began to look closely at both countries.

In *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, Partanen compares living in the United States with life in the Nordic region, focusing on four key relationships—parents and children, men and women, employees and employers, and government and citizens. She debunks criticism that Nordic countries are socialist "nanny states," revealing instead that it is we Americans who are far more enmeshed in unhealthy dependencies than we realize. Step-by-step, Partanen explains that the Nordic approach allows citizens to enjoy more individual freedom and equality than we do.

Partanen wants to open Americans' eyes to how much better things can be—to show her beloved new country what it can learn from her homeland to reinvigorate and fulfill the promise of the American dream. Offering insights, advice, and solutions, *The Nordic Theory of Everything* makes a convincing argument that we can rebuild our society, rekindle our optimism, and restore independence to our relationships and lives.

About the Author

Anu Partanen's work has appeared in the New York Times and the Atlantic. A journalist in Helsinki for many years, she has also worked at Fortune magazine as a visiting reporter through the Innovation Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University. She lives in New York City.

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A Finnish journalist, now a naturalized American citizen, asks Americans to draw on elements of the Nordic way of life to nurture a fairer, happier, more secure, and less stressful society for themselves and their children.

Moving to America in 2008, Finnish journalist Anu Partanen quickly went from confident, successful professional to wary, self-doubting mess. She found that navigating the basics of everyday life—from buying a cell phone and filing taxes to education and childcare—was much more complicated and stressful than anything she encountered in her homeland. At first, she attributed her crippling anxiety to the difficulty of adapting to a freewheeling new culture. But as she got to know Americans better, she discovered they shared her deep apprehension. To understand why life is so different in the U.S. and Finland, Partanen began to look closely at both.

In *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, Partanen compares and contrasts life in the United States with life in the Nordic region, focusing on four key relationships—parents and children, men and women, employees and employers, and government and citizens. She debunks criticism that Nordic countries are socialist “nanny states,” revealing instead that it is we Americans who are far more enmeshed in unhealthy dependencies than we realize. As Partanen explains step by step, the Nordic approach allows citizens to enjoy more individual freedom and independence than we do.

Partanen wants to open Americans’ eyes to how much better things can be—to show her beloved new country what it can learn from her homeland to reinvigorate and fulfill the promise of the American dream—to provide the opportunity to live a healthy, safe, economically secure, upwardly mobile life for everyone. Offering insights, advice, and solutions, *The Nordic Theory of Everything* makes a convincing argument that we can rebuild our society, rekindle our optimism, and restore true freedom to our relationships and lives.

- Sales Rank: #12772 in Books
- Brand: HarperCollins
- Published on: 2016-06-28
- Released on: 2016-06-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.33" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 432 pages

Features

- HarperCollins

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About the Author

Anu Partanen's work has appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Atlantic*. A journalist in Helsinki for many years, she has also worked at *Fortune* magazine as a visiting reporter through the Innovation Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University. She lives in New York City.

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49 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

A "Must-Read" Book

By C J Singh

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by Anu Partanen

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Reviewed by C J Singh (Berkeley, California)

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Noticing the high praise by Robert Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, I purchased a copy last week. Yesterday, at the Books Inc Store, Berkeley, I attended the author's lively presentation. She answered audience questions with precise knowledge, concision, and grace.

“THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: In Search of a Better Life,” documented with more than 400 research citations and written in highly engaging style is an excellent example of lucid critical analysis.

The widely held stereotype in the US of Nordic countries is that they are “nanny states” that discourage individuality and impose high taxes. In fact, the Nordic countries foster enhanced adult individuality by minimizing dependencies on family members and employers. And their Nordic countries' taxes are comparable to the US taxes. Just how they accomplish is convincingly detailed in the book.

The subtitle “In Search of a Better Life” accurately describes the author’s view-point and tone. An immigrant to the US who arrived from Finland eight years ago, now in love with the country of her adoption, she is also proud of her heritage. Rightly so, the Nordic countries have been consistently top-ranked as the happiest. The US is not even in the top ten.

Partanen offers suggestions based on the “The Nordic Theory of Love” (Chapter 2); for better “Family Values for Real” (Chapter 3); for children “Attaining Educational Success” (Chapter 4); for better health care “How Universal Health Care Could Set You Free” (Chapter 5). The titles and subtitles of the next four chapters are also equally apt: “Ask What Your Country Can Do for You”; “Bringing Back the American Dream”; “Business as Unusual: How to Run a Company in the Twenty-First Century”; “The Pursuit of Happiness: It’s Time to Rethink Success.”

Recently, I posted an update of my review of the earlier edition of the most widely adopted college textbook in the US: Diane Hacker and Nancy Sumner’s “A Writer’s Reference: Eighth Edition.” Anu Partanen’s “THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: In Search of a Better Life” merits just as wide adoption for all college students. Not only for college students, I whole-heartedly recommend this book to all readers.

(May I add that

after having posted reviews of more than 120 books on amazon.com, this is the first that I recommend as a "must-read.") -- C J Singh

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Essentially the Nordic theory of love offers care for its people from prenatal life to ...

By Steve LQ

The author makes absolutely clear what the differences are between the way the U.S. and the Nordic governments operate on behalf of their citizens. Essentially the Nordic theory of love offers care for its people from prenatal life to retirement and old age in such ways that their citizens do not have to worry about money at every stage of their lives, like American citizens do. Heavy on footnotes (over 300) and bibliography, Anu Partanen presents a carefully detailed comparison of all aspects of life in the U.S., particularly education and health care, at the same time as she exults in her American citizenship. Down-to-earth, almost conversational, this book is a must-read for anyone who mistakenly dismisses the Nordic countries as "socialist" without understanding how their systems really work.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

What You Needed To Know About the Nordic Miracle But Didn't Know To Ask

By R. McCullough

The Nordic Theory of Everything is an eye opening comparison of the socio-economic structures supporting (or not supporting) the Nordic nations (primarily the author's home country of Finland) and the current United States, by a writer whose life has bridged both worlds. We in the United States are fed a distorted view of life in nations like Finland, possibly to support systems in the United States that no longer work and haven't for some time. This book clears up many misunderstandings about the Nordic point of view. Both

nations have their good and bad points but while the Nordic countries are overcoming the issues that beset all developed nations, overall progressing into the 21st Century, the United States in many ways is falling behind the other developed nations by clinging to a mythology based in a bygone era. The author addresses shortcomings in the Nordic philosophy and well as her admiration for the good qualities of her adopted home in America as well. All in all a revealing and balance look at both philosophies of how to run a society.

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