

A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION
AMONG CERTAIN GROUPS OF IMMIGRANTS
IN THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

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MAJOR PARS TRAHIT AD SE MINOREM

P R E F A C E

The process of acculturation has always presented a challenge for the students of anthropology. It has been studied and discussed in its multiple aspects by many a scholar. They all sought to understand the factors contributing to this process and how this process as a whole works. The present work, too, is an attempt in this direction.

This paper deals with Canadian immigrants, but it is not a study of immigration in general, nor is it a study of any particular community of immigrants in the province of Manitoba. Further, this work is not concerned with the problems created by the prejudices and racial conflicts between the majority group and any minority groups. If this problem is touched at all, it is only tangentially touched in order to clarify some aspects of our subject.

The aim and scope of this work is a comparative study of two groups of people - Hutterites and Romanians - * who immigrated to Manitoba prior to 1930 from the agricultural areas of their place of origin. It is an endeavour to set forth the course of acculturation underwent by these

*The author chose this spelling out of the three existent spellings - Romanian, Rumanian, Roumanian.

immigrants in Manitoba, and, more specifically, to explain why these two groups differed dramatically in their adjustment to Canadian society. It is hoped, also that this work represents a significant addition to the explication of the process of acculturation of immigrants in general. But the primary intention of the author was to restrict his description and analysis to certain specified immigrant groups in their encounter with the new society, and to identify the variables which seem to have determined the accomplished, differential mode of response of these two groups of immigrants in the acculturation process.

The author chose three variables which he found most helpful to his purpose, for they not only can be used to serve as criteria for classifying various immigrant peoples into distinct types, but, further, and in conjunction with a fourth variable, viz., the structure and value system of the 'new', or, receiving society, they are crucial, as we see it, to a clearer understanding of the entire process of acculturation of the specific immigrant groups in question.

The introduction of this work sets forth the theoretical framework that shall be used as a frame of reference in our investigation of the two selected groups of immigrants - Hutterites and Romanians.

Following the introduction there are two chapters, each of which is divided into sections indicated by appropriate headings according to the content of the section. Chapter One is concerned with the acculturation of the Hutterites, and Chapter Two is concerned with the acculturation of the Romanian immigrants.

The study of Hutterite society in Manitoba was facilitated by the literature available in this field. This literature consists of a variety of works written on the sociological, anthropological, geographical and historical aspects of this group of immigrants. This rich and varied written material did not, however, by itself, fulfill the requirements demanded by such a task as this, i.e., to analyze the process of acculturation of the Hutterite group. Therefore, field work, i.e., first-hand observation of persons and their institutions in their natural setting, was deemed both necessary and desirable. A series of visits to the Hutterite colonies in the vicinity of Winnipeg helped the author to become acquainted first-hand with the people he proposed to study and their mode of existence. However, the written material was the primary source used for describing and analyzing the Hutterite group.

The study of the Romanian immigrants in Manitoba presented a more difficult problem than did the study of the

Hutterite group. There is very little literature available in this field. After an intensive search made by personal contact, and letters, research at different libraries both private and public in Canada and the United States, only a small number of publications was gathered. Field work, therefore, played a major role in the study of the Romanian group. The author chose the five largest groups of Romanians in Manitoba, i.e., those found in Winnipeg, Inglis, Roblin, Lenard, and Shell Valley, and he spent about six months among them. He started his regular visits on February 1st, 1962 and finished them on July 27th, 1962. The visits made by the author among the Romanians were not formal, nor "official" in any sense of the word, but were informal. The author visited them as a friend, and was thus able to enter into the intimacy of their attitudes and behaviour.

It has been the author's purpose to select sufficiently significant data to depict the personal aspect of the acculturation situation among the Romanians. Intimate personal documents, such as letters, diaries, autobiographies, and life histories - though somewhat limited in quantity - have been used as extensively as possible. It is also true that such sources have serious limitations in quality as well. For example, immigrant diaries were usually written by

sensitive, self-conscious individuals who are not necessarily random samples of their group. Nevertheless, such documents are closer to the actual life experience of persons than elaborate statistical tables prepared by those who treat immigrants as statistical units, and not as persons. Diaries which are not meant for publication tend to be closer to reality than published autobiographies of literary persons. Personal letters are one of the better, if not the best, sources of material on the immigrant.

Many letters have been seen, written by persons who may hardly be called literate. Nevertheless, they reveal much.

Life histories, which were secured through personal interviews, are restricted to the typical members of the group and are thus representative of the group in question.

Most Romanians were quite eager to co-operate, i.e., to tell their life history, their past and present orientations, their satisfactions and dissatisfactions, their hopes and disappointments.

The eagerness of their co-operation may be explained by the fact that the author himself is a Romanian immigrant. Thus, they felt that they were telling their life history to another Romanian immigrant like themselves.

The results of these investigations in the field brought to light new information which caused the author

to change his initial hypothesis of the process of acculturation among Romanian people.

Following these two chapters on the acculturation of the Hutterites and Romanians, there is a final conclusion of the whole work.

The author's interest in this study has not been motivated by scientific interest alone. His interest has been motivated also by a personal interest in the Romanian immigrants. It has been his purpose to understand the factors which determine the speed and effectiveness of the process of acculturation which varies from group to group. He wanted to understand, in particular, the stages of transition underwent by the Romanian people in Manitoba, and compare them with his own experiences. Thus, the interest of the author in this study was motivated at once by scientific curiosity, and a personal curiosity created by his own contact with both the Canadian culture and the Romanian immigrant in Manitoba.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

This work, like any other, is a cultural product to which many minds have contributed. The author's awareness of numerous specific influences on his thinking are indicated by the footnote and bibliographical acknowledgments. But such do not indicate all the contributions to the present work. Much, of course, is due to my former professors, Dr. R. W. Dunning of the University of British Columbia, and the late D. Matthews of the University of Manitoba, who have given me the necessary training for such an undertaking as this. I acquired lasting obligations to Professor M. Stancliff of the University of Manitoba, under whose supervision this work has been done, and Dr. W. Morrison of United College for his minute reading of this work and his valuable criticism.

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variables provide a broad classification of immigrants into three types or categories, which are as follows:

1. Specialized category.
2. Compact.
3. Isolated.

This classification together with a fourth variable, which is the structure of the receiving society, enables one to understand the process of acculturation underwent by the respective groups of immigrants. Each category or type of immigrants behaves in a manner peculiar to itself in the new milieu, and reacts in a particular way to the process of acculturation. Thus the behaviour of a group of immigrants in a new milieu and its reaction to the process of acculturation are much more readily understood if the category to which the group belongs is known.

The process of acculturation underwent by the Hutterite and Romanian peasants who immigrated to Manitoba prior to 1930 is the subject of this study. These particular groups of immigrants have been chosen because they are clear-cut examples of two of our theoretical immigrant types. The Hutterites represent the "specialized category" type, and the Romanians represent the 'isolated' immigrant type.

The theoretical framework developed in the introduction is used as the frame of reference in the comparative study of our selected groups, and in the analysis of the process of acculturation underwent by them. The changes that occurred and their mode of occurrence, are shown in each case.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PART I - THE SCOPE OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

For more than two decades now, anthropological science has sought continuously to enlarge its sphere of research, directing its attention beyond the so-called classical domain, i.e., the study of nonliterate societies, and the analysis of all aspects and activities specific to human physical creation, to the study of contemporary cultures.¹

The scientific curiosity of anthropologists has been growing continuously and still is growing today so as to embrace the diverse aspects of complex societies. Present day anthropologists seek to understand the conditions that develop when two different cultures come into contact and act, reciprocally, one on the other.

¹A. L. Kroeber says . . . "The subject of anthropology is limited only by men. It is not restricted by time - it goes back into geology as far as man can be traced. It is not restricted by region but is world-wide in scope. It has specialized on the primitive because no other science would deal seriously with them, but it has never renounced its intent to understand the high civilizations also." A. L. Kroeber (ed.), Anthropology Today (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. xiii.