THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN ETHNIC FOLK ART:

AN EXPLORATORY AND DESCRIPTIVE SOCIOLOGICAL

STUDY OF TWO ETHNIC GROUPS IN WINNIPEG

By

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ABSTRACT

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN ETHNIC FOLK ART:
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STUDY OF TWO ETHNIC GROUPS IN WINNIPEG

The socio-cultural complex associated with ethnic folk art is explored in this paper. Two Canadian ethnic groups are studied. These are the Latvians and Ukrainians. In Winnipeg the groups are strongly differentiated by size and social organization.

The central problem is to determine the applicability of Milton C. Albrecht's institutional schema of art to Latvian and Ukrainian folk art.

Twenty-five Latvian and Ukrainian folk artists took part in the project. A case study approach was used. Personal interviews were conducted.

The material collected demonstrated the general applicability of the schema. The most important specific finding was the artists' utilization of their art as a means of identifying with their ethnic group.

An attempt was made to specify the types of relationships that may exist between three basic components of the schema.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to provide information

on the socio-cultural complex associated with the folk art

of artists from two ethnic groups in Winnipeg.

This work may be classified under the general field

of the sociology of art. This field has suffered from

"sheer neglect" on the part of sociologists (Etzkorn, 1973:

343). As a consequence, it is underdeveloped. A lack of

basic empirical surveys is a major obstacle to progress in

the sociology of art. It is necessary "... to undertake a

great many frankly exploratory and descriptive studies in

order to ascertain the over-all dimensions of this field.

Only then will it be possible to formulate and test hypotheses

that will yield generalizations applicable to all or to cer-

tain types of arts." (Barnett 1970:632). This thesis will

be such an exploratory and descriptive sociological study.

It will be concerned with the visual folk arts of contemporary

Winnipeg Latvians and Ukrainians.

There are three problems involved in the analysis of

the socio-cultural complex of folk art. First, it will be

necessary to develop a general, theoretical schema of art.
This will act to direct research. The latter, in turn,
will attempt to discover if the elements of the schema are
associated with the folk art of the two groups. The second
problem is to chart the relationships between the elements.
The third is to ascertain the similarities and differences
between the groups.

These problems are clear-cut. However, the research
exigencies of this study will require their modification.
The artist is the principal element in the eight element
schema. Information about the elements will be gleaned from
a sample of Latvian and Ukrainian artists. No attempt will
be made to study the other elements directly, due to the
necessarily limited scale of this study. Precedents may
be found in the works of Wilson (1964), and Rosenberg and
Fliegel (1970). The implications of this approach are dis-
cussed in Chapter IV.

The Latvians and Ukrainians are both Eastern European
in origin. Both groups inherit centuries of folk art tradi-
tions. (Dzervitis, 1973; Burachynsky, 1955). The majority
of Latvians in Canada arrived after 1946 (Canadian Citizen-
ship Branch, 1967). The Ukrainians began migrating to
Canada in 1891. In 1961 there were 18,200 Latvians in Canada

(Canadian Citizenship Branch, 1967). Of these, 14,800

were concentrated in Ontario and Quebec. The largest

centre is Toronto with 7,500. Another 2,200 are resident

in Alberta and British Columbia. The remaining 1,200 are

scattered throughout the other provinces.

The 1971 census reports 580,655 Ukrainians in Canada.

Of these, 114,415 are resident in Manitoba. Although the

Ontario Ukrainian population is greater (159,875), the

largest urban centre is Winnipeg with 64,305. From these

figures, it is evident that the Ukrainian group outnumbers

the Latvian many times over.

The groups may be compared with regard to social

organization. The latter term refers to the formal assoc-

iations by means of which an ethnic group maintains its

native language and enables membership participation in re-

ligious, social, cultural, political and economic activities.

(Breton, 1964; Driedger, 1974; Driedger and Church, 1974;

Driedger and Peters, 1975).

The Canadian Citizenship Branch (1967) claims that

there are eleven major Latvian associations in Canada. Al-

though there are many branches of these associations, they

appear to be largely concentrated in Ontario. The Latvian

National Federation in Canada is the largest organization.
Its aims include: the maintenance of the Latvian language
and culture, the supervision of school courses for Latvian
children and adults, helping Latvian immigrants adjust to
Canadian society. The Daugavas Vanagi is an organization
dedicated to welfare work and the promotion of Latvian
culture. There are three associations based upon professional
interests. There are two art organizations. These are The
Latvian Handicraft Guild and The Latvian Artists' Associa-
tion. Sports clubs, youth organizations and The Latvian
Press Club make up the remainder of the eleven associations.

There are three Latvian church denominations in
Canada. These are: Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Latvian
Baptist. The first is the largest.

The Latvians operated fourteen part-time ethnic
schools in 1965-66. (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and
Biculturalism, Volume 4, 1970:150). Twelve were located
in Toronto. One was reported in Manitoba. However, the
author discovered that this school is no longer functioning.

Latvian publications are largely centred in Ontario.
There is a semi-weekly newspaper, a monthly sports paper,
and a bi-monthly youth magazine. (Canadian Citizenship
Branch, 1967:325).

In Manitoba, there is but one voluntary organiza-
tion, The Latvian Association, and one church, which is
Lutheran. The former is relatively dormant. The latter
does not possess its own building. It only meets once or
twice a month. (This information was provided by the Lat-
vian respondents interviewed for this study.)

With regard to the Ukrainians, the Canadian Citizen-
ship Branch (1967) counts twenty-eight associations organ-
ized under The Ukrainian Canadian Committee. The latter
acts as a co-ordinating body.

The two most significant member organizations are
The Brotherhood of Ukrainian Catholics and the Ukrainian
Self-Reliance League of Canada. The former is drawn from
the members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The latter
is based upon the membership of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox
Church. The other organizations are secular in background.
Their aims are social, cultural and artistic. There are
six national Ukrainian youth organizations. There are sev-
eral Ukrainian libraries and museums.

The Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Greek Orthodox
churches have the largest membership among Ukrainians.
About seventy percent of persons of Ukrainian origin adhere

to these churches. The remainder belong to Roman Catholic
or Protestant denominations. (Canadian Citizenship Branch,
1967:323).

The Ukrainians supported 170 part-time schools in
1965-66. (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Bicultural-
ism, Volume 4, 1970:150). Ninety-four of these were loca-
ted in Ontario. Nineteen were in Manitoba.

In 1965, there were fifty-four Ukrainian periodicals.
(Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Volume
4, 1970:173). Thirty-three of these were written in the
Ukrainian language.

The Ukrainians support thirty-one voluntary institu-
tions, twenty-seven churches and two parochial schools in
Manitoba. (Driedger, 1975). Winnipeg has been the centre
for much of Ukrainian cultural activity and development.
St. Andrew's College, the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences
and the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre are located
in Winnipeg. All three are educational institutions. The
last possesses a valuable library and a museum.

The two groups can be compared further on language
retention and endogamy.

The Ukrainians are noted for their high rate of re-
tention of their ancestral language by immigrants and native

born alike.   The rate was sixty-four percent for Canada

in 1961 (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Bicultural-

ism, Volume 4, 1970:132).   Data on the Latvian rate of re-

tention does not exist as far as the researcher could find.

However, one Latvian respondent who had recently moved from

Toronto to Winnipeg noted a lower level of use among the

Latvian children here.   She explained that her own child-

ren were using the language less and less at home.   This

corresponded to a complete lack of use outside the home.

In Toronto, they had participated in play activities with

other Latvian children and in part-time language schools.

This, in addition to almost exclusive use in the home, had

contributed to the children's interest in the language.

Other Latvians also complained that the language was losing

ground here.

Endogamy has been relatively high among Ukrainians.

In 1961 the rate of endogamy was about sixty-five percent.

(Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Volume

4, 1970:93).   Data does not seem to be available for the

Latvians.   The respondents in this study reported their

impression of a high rate of exogamy in Winnipeg.   They

attributed this phenomenon to their small population.

The Ukrainians are renown for their choral groups,

dance troupes, special religious customs and folk art. Ukrainian artists, scholars and political figures have already had a considerable impact on Canadian culture. The Latvians are known for their very large and diversified heritage of folk songs. These have been the focal point for the Latvian song festivals in Latvia and the eastern United States. Latvians are beginning to make a signifiant impression on Canadian culture.

It is evident from the above comparison of the two groups that their Winnipeg populations differ considerably. The Ukrainian group is larger and more formally organized. It possibly has higher rates of language retention and endogamy. The Winnipeg Ukrainian population gives the impression of being a focal point for Ukrainian culture in Canada.

On the other hand, the Ontario Latvian population appears to be the focal point for Latvian culture in Canada. Indeed, several Latvian respondents reported a feeling of being out of the way. Cultural activities such as choirs and dance troupes were said to miss Winnipeg more than they ought. Some cultural exchanges were reported with the Latvian community in Minneapolis. Several persons felt

that much more communication with the Ontario community

would be desirable.

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY OF ART TYPES

Art has come to be divided into several broad cat-
egories by scholars. It is necessary to give some consid-
eration to these categories. This is because works on folk
art have, as their principal foci, museum type description
and aesthetic analysis. Socio-cultural analysis is very
rare. However, it is less rare for related arts, especially
primitive and fine art. Therefore, certain of the other art
categories will be discussed in order to develop a range of
information and examples to use as sources of ideas in the
present research. There are four relevant categories.

Kitsch refers to "predigested" art that does not re-
quire reflection (Greenberg, 1957). "It is fabricated by
technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive
consumers, their participation being limited to the choice
between buying and not buying." (Macdonald, 1957:60).
Examples are simulated batik and mass produced velvet paint-
ings. The charges of immature symbolism, childish simplic-
ity and crudeness often laid against folk art are more pro-
perly placed upon kitsch according to Finkelstein (1967).
Kitsch is mentioned here only to allay confusion between folk

art and so-called popular art such as hobby crafts, e.g. needlework kits.

"Primitive art refers to the artistic output of literally thousands of often small, areal cultures, each of which developed and nurtured its own art tradition." (Wingirt, 1962:8).

According to Wingirt, primitive societies are characterized by preliteracy and the lack of a concept of political organization.(Wingirt, 1962). Examples of such societies are the Negro peoples south of the Sahara in Africa; the Eskimo and the American Indians, excepting the high cultures of the Andean region, central America and Mexico; the island societies of the Pacific, and certain areas of the islands adjacent to Southeast Asia; Australia. (Some of these can no longer be considered primitive due to Western intrusion.)

Primitive art is especially characterized by isolation. (Harmon, 1959:454). Original local traditions predominate. There is a comparative lack of outside influences in the art.

Historically, the fine arts are products of the evolution of the western art academy. The latter has its

origins in the efforts of Renaissance artists to gain economic independence from the guild system and to raise their social status. (Kristeller, 1951; Munro, 1949).

Fine art is the art associated with the centres of western civilization and academic learning. It has grown with urbanism and industrialism. It has developed an ideology of purity. That is, the primary function of fine art is said to be the satisfaction of the aesthetic sensibilities. (Munroe, 1949). It has become highly individualistic and innovative. It is oriented to the impersonal marketplace. (Finklestein, 1947). It has attained a degree of institutional autonomy. (Albrecht, 1970).

The term Beaux Arts or Fine Arts was coined in the eighteenth century. It marked the climax of a debate begun in the Renaissance. This debate centred on the validity of the claim of some scholars and artists that the visual arts were peers of poetry and other liberal arts. From the eighteenth century on, such status was more and more acceded to drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture and closely related arts. These arts were, of course, those associated with the art academies that were recognized by the social and intellectual elite of western societies.

The art academies had first been created in the Ren-

aissance by humanists and artists. Their fundamental ideal
was that visual design[1] should be taught in a formal and
scientific manner. (Hauser, 1962:II,62). Previously, the
guilds had taught apprentices by requiring them to repli-
cate works of the masters until they could imitate them.
The teaching of design by formal principles and scientific
investigation has continued to predominate the art acade-
mies.

In part, the term, folk art, was developed to offset
the notion of the fine arts. It was cretated in the nine-
teenth century. It was a spinoff of the elder academic
study of folklore and of the interest of romantic fine art-
ists in the countryside and common people. (Cocchiara,
1959:456).

Folk art has been viewed as a rural counterpart to
the more urban fine art in a given social system. (Harmon,
1959:452). This is in line with Foster's important inter-
pretation of the concept of folk society. Foster says, "A

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[1] "A framework or scheme of pictorial construction on which
the artist bases the formal organization of his total work.
In a broader sense, it may be considered as synonymous with
the term, form." (Ocvirk, Bone, Stinson and Wigg, 1971:158).
The term, form, refers to, "the arbitrary organization or in-
ventive arrangement of all the visual elements according to
principles which will develop an organic unity in the total
work of art." (Ocvirk, Bone, Stinson, and Wigg, 1971:159).

folk society is not a whole society, an isolate, in it-
self. It is a 'half-society', a part of a larger social
unit (usually a nation) which is vertically and horizon-
tally structured." (Foster, 1967:5). Foster distinguishes
the isolated primitive completely from the folk. There
are alternative definitions of the term, folk. (Erikon,
1960:126-131). However, Foster's definition has proved
to be highly useful in the empirical studies reported in
Hansen's European Folk Art (1968) and in The World Encyclo-
pedia of Art (1959). It will be used here as well. The
term, folk art, will apply to the artistic activities and
products of the partially isolated, largely or formerly
rural segment of a population. Furthermore, folk art is
done "in an environment ruled by an uncontested artistic
tradition, but that tradition itself is continually renewed
as it is recalled or accepted." (Cocchiara, 1959:464). It
is also evident that although the tradition may be uncontested,
outside elements are absorbed from the more progressive urban
artistic activity in the cultural system. (Harmon 1959:452).
For example, Duchartre reports that in pre-nineteenth cen-
tury, France, "Costumes in the provinces natually adopted
features of Paris fashions from time to time, but varying

amounts and at varying speeds, according to the region."

(Duchartre, 1968:131).

Folk art is supposedly not pure for it resides largely in otherwise utilitarian or ritualistic objects. Furthermore, the artists have often remained anonymous. There have been few claims to absolute originality and little abhorrence of plagerism in folk art. (Finkelstein, 1947:34).

Folk art has retreated before urbanism and industrialism. (Bossert, 1953). It still exists in some regional and ethnic communities. Frisia, in the northwest of the Netherlands, is an example of the former. (DeHaan, 1968:248). The two Canadian groups in this study are examples of the latter.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

There have been a few efforts to articulate an-

alytical sociological schemes of particular arts. An

attempt has been made in cinema by Huaco (1970), in liter-

ature by Duncan (1953) and Wilson (1964), in music by Mueller

(1951) and Nash (1956, 1964, 1970). The most comprehensive

and complex schema appears to be that of Milton C. Albrecht.

His concepts are intended to be applicable to any one or any

combination of the arts depending upon the level of analysis

and research exigencies. Albrecht's lead will be followed in

this study.

Although Albrecht's work is broadly based, he is

especially indebted to Duncan. Each author considers his

schema to be an institutional[2] analysis. Both assume the

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[2] For a definition of the term, institution, the principle
author, Albrecht, refers to Hertzler's work. "A social in-
stitution is a complex of concepts and attitudes regarding
the ordering of a particular class of unavoidable or indis-
pensable human relationships that are involved in satisfying
certain elemental individual wants, certain compelling social
needs, or other eminently desirable social ends ... Every
operative and controlling activity of a given society takes
place through institutions." (Hertzler, 1929:67-68). Al-
brecht notes that institutions are marked by "...character-
istic patterns of behavior in society. These patterns are
structured by their specialized personnel, by special types
of roles and activities, and by particular groupings and
organizations, and are regulated by distinct norms, values,
and beliefs, marked by appropriate symbols, implemented by
certain types of physical equipment." (Albrecht, 1970:2).

validity of the type of analysis illustrated best in Parsons'
work. "... The artist supplies a want or meets a need in
his public and on the expressive level he receives 'appre-
ciation' and admiration in return. He is highly sensitive
to the attitudes of the significant others among his public.
He has a responsibility for the maintenance of the standards
which have been established, both to other persons and to
himself, because these are institutionalized standards."
(Parsons, 1967:409).

From a similar line of reasoning, Duncan derives
three basic analytical elements. He forges the three,
artist, critic, public, into a concise triadic relationship.
Then he outlines five possible systems incorporating the
three elements.

Albrecht does not explicitly endorse relationships
among the elements he describes. However, he does incor-
porate a greater range of elements. To Duncan's three
components, Albrecht adds five more. His scheme may be
described as being structured in orientation and as being
extensive in capacity. Duncan's paradigm can be seen as
the dynamic core of the larger scheme.

Consider Duncan's five arrangements of the core
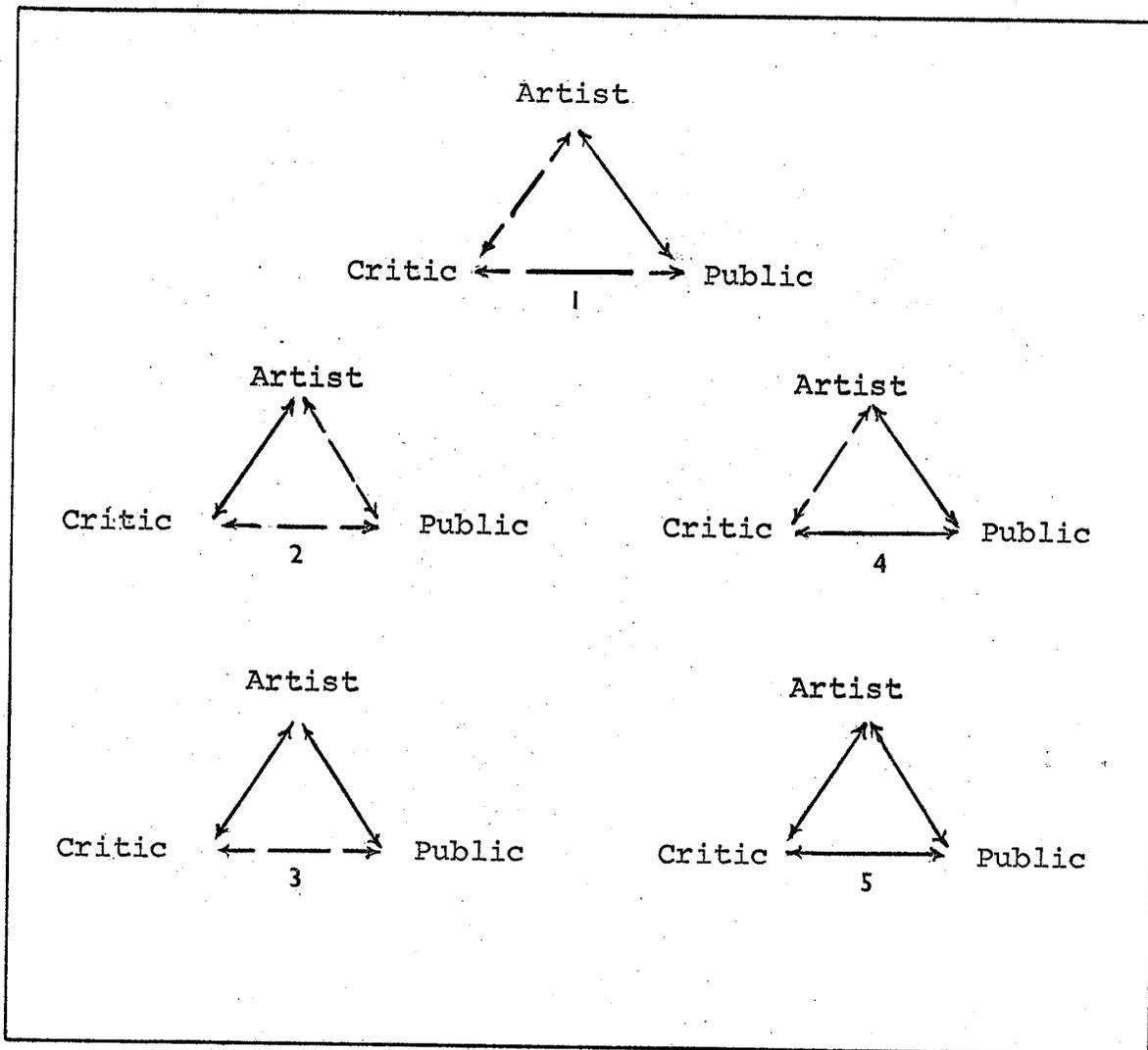elements. They are graphically presented in Figure I.

FIGURE I: DUNCAN'S TYPOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ARTIST, CRITIC, PUBLIC

Note: The solid lines indicate strong or direct relationships.
The dotted lines indicate weak or indirect relationships.

No. 1, in this figure, represents a simple situation where the role of critic is almost non-existent. Critiques derived from given standards are not produced. Matters of simple factual discussion are the closest approximation to such, e.g. the labelling of a hue.

In No. 2, the critics act as a strong censoring force such as a priesthood might. This situation is said to exist, for example, where there is a class monopoly. The public is only remotely related to the artist.

In No. 3, the artist is strongly related to both critics and publics. The critics act as connoisseurs or men of taste. They disdain to interact with the public in artistic matters. The artist does, however, interact with the public.

No. 4 represents a situation where the artist feels distant from the critic, but both interact with the public. The artist may even be hostile toward the critic to some extent. This typifies the situation of newspaper reviewers.

In No. 5, artist, critic and public assume positions of mutual responsibility relative to each other.

In this exploratory effort, Duncan's paradigms will have the role of guiding the search for basic relationships.

The analysis that follows lays greater stress on Albrecht, however. The reason for this is that a structural approach is, necessarily, preliminary to the analysis of relation-ships.

Albrecht lists a minimum of eight structural ele-ments of the art institutions. These are: technical systems, forms of art, artists, disposal and reward systems, publics, art critics, principles of judgment, and sustaining cultural values. (See Figure II) Some of these elements are, he feels, primarily social, some primarily cultural. Most are mixed. He draws upon the Kroeber-Parsons formulation in order to distinguish the concepts, society and culture. A society, or, more exactly, a social system is defined as "... the specifically relational system of interaction among individuals and collectivities." (Kroeber and Parsons, 1958:583). Culture refers to "... transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic - meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human be-havior and the artifacts produced through behavior." (Kroeber and Parsons, 1958:583).

Two of Albrecht's elements are less relevant to this study. They will be briefly reviewed prior to the