Continuity and Change of Ukrainian Wedding Traditions in Canada

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1. Introduction

Canada has grown through immigration by people of different ethnic origins, including Ukrainian immigrants, who have played a significant role in Canada's population growth. Ukrainians have immigrated in four major waves to Canada. The first wave occurred between 1891 and 1914 when around 140,000 Ukrainians immigrated to Canada from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The second wave occurred in the 1920s after the Canadian Immigration Act had been amended in 1923 to permit nationals from former enemy countries to immigrate. The third wave was caused by the Second World War when Ukrainians from refugee camps in Austria and West Germany came to Canada. Recently, about 18-20,000 new Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada during the so-called 'fourth wave,' which has been happening from 1991 to the present time. Ukrainians have been immigrating to Canada for more than a century, and the residents of Ukrainian (single and multiple) origin formed around 4% of the Canadian population in 2001.

At the provincial level, during the last ten years, the Ukrainian ethnic population has increased in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario while it has decreased

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in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Ontario has been the province with the largest number of Ukrainian Canadians, and Alberta has had the second-largest number. Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto have been the three metropolitan areas that have had the largest Ukrainian populations during the last thirty years. In 1981, Edmonton replaced Winnipeg as the Canadian city with the largest population of Ukrainian ethnic origin, and the number of Ukrainian Canadians in Edmonton increased from 84,565 in 1981 to 126,720 in 2001.1

In contrast to the growing number of people of Ukrainian ethnic origin in Canada, the Ukrainian Canadian community has experienced a gradual decrease in the number of Ukrainians of single ethnic origin. The proportions of Ukrainian Canadians of single and multiple ethnic origins reflect the proportions of endogamy and exogamy in this group. Some scholars have used the proportions of ethnically endogamous and exogamous marriages as indicators of acculturation and assimilation and have tried to use these proportions to indicate the degree to which the minority ethnic groups are being integrated into Canadian society. It is interesting to note that the English, Irish, and Scottish have the highest proportions of people reporting multiple origins. This finding is what might be expected, given the British historical cultural dominance in Canada, but how can we explain the high proportion of Ukrainians reporting multiple origins? Do these reports indicate the integration of people of Ukrainian origin into the mainstream Canadian culture? The statistical data may do so, but it would be inaccurate to view assimilation and integration as the only trends: processes that might culminate in the eventual absorption of the Ukrainian ethnic group into the larger culture and general population. Change is not occurring in only one direction.

The purpose of this study is not prove that statistics on ethnically endogamous and exogamous marriages are indicators of assimilation. Instead, in this study, I attempt to emphasize that many other factors influence the expression of ethnic identity. In fact, my fieldwork materials indicate that Ukrainian single-origin