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POLES APART?

An Intergenerational Study of Selected Samples of Postwar  
Polish Immigrants in South Australia

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PREFACE

"Poles Apart?" is the result of six years of contact with first and second generation Poles in South Australia. From this contact I know that I have been the beneficiary, for in this microcosm of Anglo-Australian and Polish interaction, I have been considerably integrated into their way of thinking and living through reading of Polish history and literature, experience of ethnic cultural and religious events, and participation in formal and informal social activities.

The Polish second generation respondents in this study I know have been patiently waiting to peruse what has been researched about them. I sincerely hope that out of this research, they may learn something of themselves which has been pieced together by one who is not, in the ethnic sense, one of "them".

Although care has been taken throughout this study to analyse in detail types and not individuals so as to maintain the pledge of confidentiality which researchers must make, nevertheless I feel sure that those individuals who actually participated in this sociological research will be able to read themselves into this work. Indeed, I hope they will be able to do this. It is in this way that the ideal types and the voices of the Polish second generation will come alive and continue to be part of the everyday reality which this thesis has been able to capture only in a narrow span of time. It is in this way, too, that they may learn something of a wider first generation than they may perhaps have had the opportunity to meet, and above all, of the future third generation to whom the subjects of this study will represent the link back into the Polish past that they will sometimes want to experience.

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous assistance of so many people. To Dr. J.J. Smolicz (Department of Education) I owe a tremendous debt, for it was he who guided me with his flashes of insight and firm encouragement whenever I faltered. To the late Dr. G.L. Buxton, who was tragically killed while on study leave soon after I began this research, I am grateful for initial ideas in the field of Australian immigration. Professor A. Gough (Department of History) also contributed helpful suggestions throughout. Dr. J.M. Tregenza and others in the History Department's postgraduate research group acted as a sounding board for ideas put forward in my research papers delivered at five seminars during 1972-1974. Another different perspective came from staff and post-graduates in the Department of Education to whom I gave a sixth research seminar in 1973.

There are many others to whom I owe acknowledgement for more specific assistance. Mr. H. Lemaniak was tireless in his work of translating material from Polish into English onto cassette tapes for me and in his reading of a few chapter drafts; Mr. P. Leppard (Statistics Department) gave very valuable assistance, sometimes at short notice, in the complexities of computer programming; and Ms. M. Secombe (Department of Education) offered helpful suggestions on overall structure and content in the latter stages. Mr. R. Smith,

Mr. D. Wilton, and Mr. R. Birks I thank for their permission to gain access to students' records at The University of Adelaide. On my research trip to Canberra in August 1974, I consulted many people to whom I am grateful: Dr. E.F. Kunz, Dr. J.I. Martin, Dr. C.A. Price and Professor J. Zubrzycki. Mr. L. Paszkowski mailed me copies of some of his historical articles, and Mr. M. Szczepanowski kindly granted me access to Polish newspapers and other material located in the Archives of the Polish Historical Society in Adelaide. Visits to libraries in Canberra and London also assisted me in the search for material; my thanks in particular go to Mrs. J. Nowak of the Polish Library at 9 Princes Gardens, London, and Mr. J. Grundy of the Department of Immigration Library in Canberra. Recognition is also very sincerely given to Mrs. J. Tonkin and Mrs. L. Barr for their excellent typing of my work over a number of years, and to Mrs. S. Shinnick for her production of the final draft.

My sincere thanks go to the Polish subjects who appear in the following pages, about whom this thesis is concerned and without whom, of course, this thesis could not have been written.

Last, but not least, I am utterly indebted to my family for their unending patience, moral encouragement and time-saving assistance with routine matters. This applies to my mother and to my late father, and especially to my wife, who had continually to endure a desk-ridden husband and who never, fortunately, ceased to hope that he would one day be able to spend more time with herself and their baby daughter.

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## SUMMARY

A full understanding of the nature of Australian society demands a thorough knowledge of the process of adaptation of the first and second generations of immigrants. This research has been an intergenerational study of selected samples of postwar Polish immigrants in South Australia, with its prime focus upon the second generation. Using an historico-sociological approach, the ethnicity and assimilation patterns of the second generation have been examined against the background of the historical fortunes of the emigré first generation and the "two worlds" in which its children have been raised. Two central themes predominated - one was the process of cultural transmission between the first and second generations with its implication for the future third generation; and the other was the relative influence of the two socialisation processes of ethnicisation and assimilation in the upbringing of the second generation. The issues involved in the study were probed using four different research methods, namely those of self-administered questionnaire, structured interview, documentary source material and participant observation.

In Chapters 2 and 3, there is an examination of the society in which the first generation was raised, and an analysis of who, when, why and how many Poles have arrived in Australia. The Australian and Polish cultural values in which the second generation has been born and bred are interpreted in Chapters 4 and 5. Following the details of sampling procedure and samples, the theoretical framework of the research is presented in Chapter 7 and the adaptation of the second generation explained in terms of the degree of ethnicity-maintenance and Anglo-assimilation using a "3 x 3" matrix.

There follows in Chapters 8 and 9 a detailed analysis of the linguistic, cultural, structural and ideological components of ethnicity and assimilation with reference to the two second generation samples and their parents. The various modes of adaptation outlined in Chapter 7 are further investigated in Chapter 10 in the form of portraits of the four "ideal types" isolated in this research: Polish-Australian, High Ethnic, Anglo-Assimilate and Alienate. Their precise proportions in Australian society cannot be calculated; rather it is shown that these types, with certain personal characteristics and from particular home backgrounds, do actually exist in Australian society. The interesting and significant variations in their patterns of ethnicity and assimilation demonstrate the limitations of such collective labels as "ethnic-Australians" or even as "second generation Poles". Such blanket terms serve only to throw confusion into discussion on the process of cultural transmission and to lead to misconceived and ill-directed conclusions in such important areas as education and social welfare.

Chapter 11 explores where the gains and losses lie in the adaptation process of the second generation - gains and losses for Australian society, for the Polish community and for the individual himself. The gain in the case of the tertiary students lay in their linguistic, educational and occupational breakthrough.

However, it has been achieved only at the expense of significant damage to individual ethnic cultural (and particularly linguistic) systems. Thus the rather meagre knowledge, and often lukewarm evaluation, of many Polish cultural items on the part of the second generation augurs ill for the chances of cultural transmission to the third generation. Where the links of cultural transmission are likely to remain the strongest will be in the homes of High Ethnics and Polish-Australians, particularly if their firm intentions, and those of their parents, to marry fellow Poles are realised.