

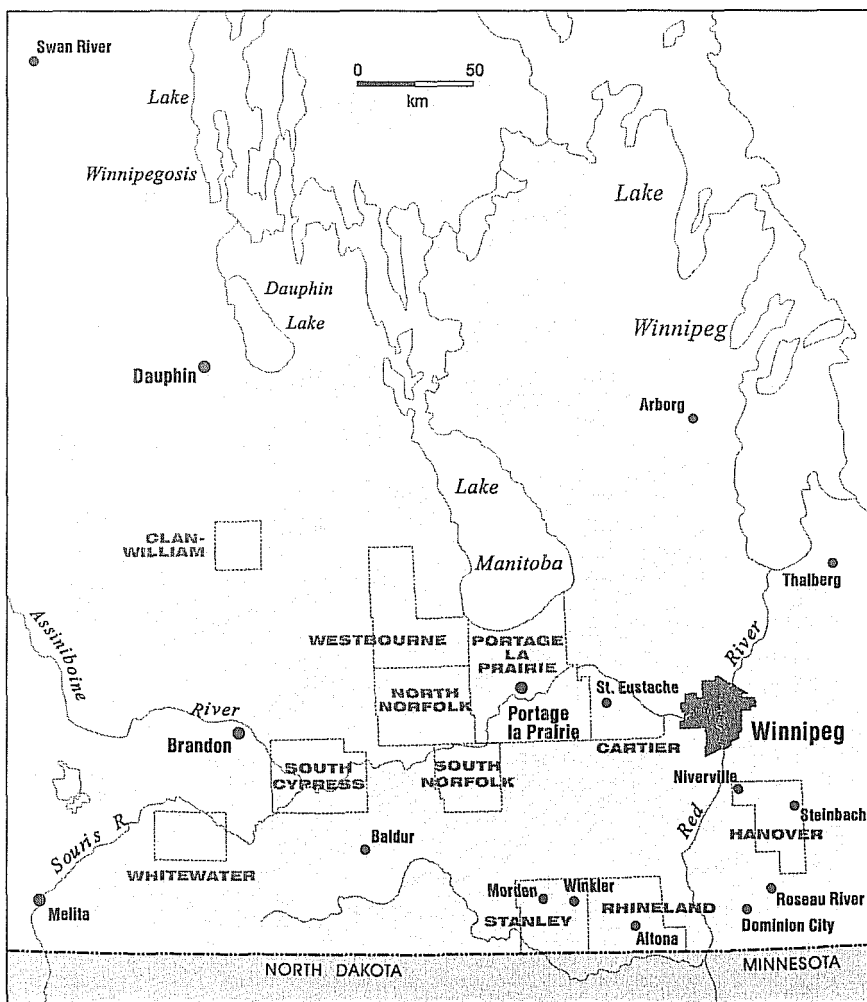
The Maintenance of German as a Mother Tongue and Home Language in the Province of Manitoba

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The rate of language loss in an ethno-cultural community is usually of great concern to its membership because the common ancestral language is often considered to be one of the ties that bind a community together. The “German” community in Canada is of considerable size, and German is one of the major non-official languages with 424,645 Canadians claiming German as their single mother tongue¹ in 1991 and an additional 51,065 individuals who reported using German as one of several mother tongues.² According to the 1991 Census of Canada, German was used as the primary home language³ by 114,270 Canadians.⁴ However, these numbers are declining sharply.

The maintenance of German as a mother tongue and home language across Canada, and in particular in Alberta, was investigated in a major study by Prokop (1989). On the basis of an analysis of 1971 and 1981 census data, the rapid disappearance of German in Alberta, especially in the urban areas, was documented. The prediction was made that, all other factors being equal, German would disappear as a home language within two generations in the urban areas of the province. On the other hand, German was found to be flourishing in Alberta’s Hutterite colonies,

thus reflecting their continued growth and expansion. A follow-up study (Prokop, 1998) analyzed the 1991 Census data against this background and found the previously observed trends confirmed. The number of Albertans with German mother tongue decreased by 21% between 1971 and 1991, and the number of those with German home language fell by 22%. But this decline was not equally distributed: in the urban areas of Alberta the use of German as a home language decreased by 57% from 1971 to 1991 while it increased by 6% in the rural areas of the province. An analysis of the data by census sub-division and enumeration area⁵ (which makes it possible to identify the linguistic demographics of small regions, such as individual Hutterite colonies) revealed that the growth in the use of German as a home language was limited to the Hutterite colonies.



This paper presents the results of a comparable analysis of the dynamics of German language maintenance in Manitoba. The province has a sizeable, diverse population of "German" origin, and according to census figures large numbers of German speakers still reside in both urban and rural areas.

According to the 1991 Census, the population of Manitoba was 1,079,390. English was, of course, the mother tongue most frequently acquired in childhood by Manitobans (784,210), followed by German (67,975), French (49,130), and Cree (21,415).⁶ English was also the language used most often in the home (935,255); French took second place with 23,545 speakers, and German ranked third with 22,790 persons claiming to speak it as their home language.⁷ Table 1 presents the census data for German mother tongue and home language from 1971 to 1991. It also shows a decline of 17.8% in the number of German mother tongue speakers between 1971 and 1991 and a precipitous decrease of 39.5% in the number of Manitobans speaking German as their primary home language, an even steeper decrease than was observed in Alberta.

Table 1: German as a Mother Tongue and Home Language in Manitoba, 1971-1991

	German Mother Tongue	German Home Language	Mennonites	Hutterites
1971 Census	82,705	37,635	59,555	4,790
1981 Census	74,180	30,305	63,490	5,940
1991 Census	67,975	22,790	66,005	7,445

Manitobans for whom German is either their mother tongue or the language spoken most often in the home may be assigned to three large groups, viz. Mennonites, Hutterites, and the descendants of other immigrants from German-speaking countries and regions since c.1880. The latter classification includes *Reichsdeutsche* and *Volksdeutsche*, West Germans and East Germans, Austrians and Swiss, as well as recent immigrants from Poland and other Central and East European countries who had spent some time in Germany before arriving in Canada. Unfortunately, it is impossible to identify the latter group in Canadian census data by mother tongue or home language because their pattern of language maintenance may well be very different from that displayed by Mennonites and Hutterites.

According to the 1991 Census, there were 66,005 Mennonites and 7,445 Hutterites in the province of Manitoba.⁸ Among the Mennonites, 34,150 persons had German as their mother tongue, 29,310 reported English as the language first learned in childhood, and 755 said that their first language was Dutch (presumably, meaning Low German).⁹ No language data were reported for the Hutterites.

The Historical Status of German-Speaking Mennonite and Hutterite Homes

In the mid-1870s, the Canadian government set aside two large areas in southern Manitoba for Mennonite settlements, the so-called East and West Reserves. For most Mennonite immigrants, maintaining their German language and their culture was of the utmost importance. For some of the "Russlaender", who came in the 1920s, "Germanism" was indeed a "holy cause" (Epp, 518). Some Mennonites even believed that their Christianity was tied to German (Regehr, 313). This belief had strong roots. As Regehr remarks, "the preservation of the German language, as...a spiritual, cultural, or ethnic treasure, or simply as the necessary means to communicate with older members of immigrant communities was still a matter of great concern to some Mennonite leaders in the 1930s (Regehr, 231)." Accordingly, the Mennonites established German bible schools, published newspapers and journals in German, and, finally, set up German language schools for the children.

The emphatic insistence on maintaining German as the language of the community was not shared by all Mennonite congregations and individuals. Not only did it hamper the missionary outreach to the neighbours, it also kept the Mennonites in isolation from the world around them. In several congregations, this desire to use German or Low German as a "dike" against the encroachment of the world (Neufeld, 209) was quite deliberate. A member reflected publicly on this question: "Could we possibly be using the German language in our church services, not for any love of its aesthetic beauty or its utilitarian values, but rather because it is so effective as a barrier against outside influences and thus a definite help in preserving our religion and culture in pristine purity?" (quoted in Regehr, 312-313) As early as the 1930s English became more and more important as the language of the community, but the years after the Second World War brought even greater changes for the Mennonites in Manitoba, namely an end to their previous isolation. Modern means of transportation, the increasingly widespread availability of radio and television, the introduction of the large composite school, the disappearance of the small farm, and the resulting exodus of many young people to the city had a strong impact on the Mennonite way of life. The move to the city accelerated the change-over from the German to the English language, just as the loosening of family ties and intermarriage with individuals of non-Mennonite heritage encroached on the common culture (Lohrenz, 43).

By the end of the 1950s most Canadian Mennonite Brethren congregations had made the transition to English. (Ediger) In the rural areas German was retained for a longer period of time, and the smaller and more traditional western congregations (e.g., the Old Colony and Reinlaenders) kept German worship well into the 1970s (Regehr, 314). Most congregations in the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba switched to English in the 1960s (Ens, 118).

Driedger's 1955 survey of Mennonites in a Saskatchewan bloc settlement did indeed show that at that time Mennonites, in general, could and often did speak Low German at home, in business and at work. Fifteen years later, Anderson reported that 97% of the Mennonites claimed to be able to speak their mother

tongue, and 69% said that they spoke it “frequently”, an observation confirmed subsequently by Driedger (1977). Even later, Driedger (1988, 124) was able to observe that the rural Mennonite communities in the former East and West Reserves were still highly German in language and culture. Low German could still be used in all community activities in church, in communication with neighbors, and in business transactions. Moreover, some of the older Mennonites could hardly speak English.

In Winnipeg the situation was markedly different. Although in the mid-1970s cultural identity was still found to be strong among students (79% attended a Mennonite church at least twice a month; 77% chose mostly Mennonites as their best friends, and 79% reported no exogamy in their family), native linguistic proficiency was reported to be considerably less (only 44% of the students spoke Low German or German at home). Driedger concluded that adherence to Mennonite culture would likely continue, but that the use of the German language would decline (Driedger, 1988, 176).

A number of the 38 Mennonite churches in Winnipeg did indeed still hold services in German in the mid-1980s, but much of the business in the city was conducted in English, and English was used with neighbours (Driedger, 1988, 124). A small-scale revival of the German language occurred in the 1980s as a consequence of the bilingual program sponsored by the Department of Education, but according to Neufeld (1989), few children of Mennonite Brethren churches attend these classes (p. 210).

The Hutterite presence in Manitoba goes back to the fall of 1918 when first a few, and soon almost all seventeen original Hutterite communities in South Dakota migrated to Canada because they did not perceive their religious and political beliefs to be sufficiently respected and safeguarded in the U.S., where anti-German and anti-Kaiser feelings ran high and Hutterite men were being brutally mishandled at induction centres. They settled in southern Alberta and rural Manitoba, especially in the Rural Municipality of Cartier west of Winnipeg. Between 1918 and 1922 nine colonies were founded in Manitoba and fourteen in Alberta (Peters, 34ff).¹⁰

The Hutterites were no strangers to Canada. As early as 1873 they had visited Manitoba, and then again in 1899 when they considered seriously emigrating from the U.S. in the event that military conscription became an issue during the Spanish-American War. In 1898 a colony was set up east of Dominion City on the Roseau River, but this group returned to South Dakota in 1905 after the threat of conscription had passed (Hostetler, 126). In the 1930s some hostility arose against the Hutterites because of their substantial land purchases, which allegedly resulted in a decline of the rural population and of rural prosperity. Although this sentiment was not as strong in Manitoba as it was in Alberta (where the 1942 Land Sales Prohibition Act prevented the sale of land to “enemy aliens, Hutterites, and Doukhobours”) and fewer restrictions were imposed, it persisted into the 1940s and 50s and, sporadically, beyond.

According to Peters’ own estimate there were 3,059 Hutterites in Manitoba in 1957 (105). In 1958 there were 25 colonies in Manitoba; Cartier alone had ten colonies, and the rural municipality of Portage la Prairie was second with five Hutterite

communities. The 1971 Census showed that there were 4,790 Hutterites in the province; by 1981 their number had risen to 5,940, and to 7,445 by 1991. By 1993 there were about 90 Hutterite colonies in Manitoba, most of them located in the region between Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg, and the others spread all over the province (Map of Hutterite Colonies of Manitoba, 1993).

German Speakers and Generations

According to the 1991 Census, there were 63,495 Manitobans who had identified German as their mother tongue, and 22,765 persons reported speaking German as their primary home language. In other words, approximately one third of those who had learned German as their mother tongue still used German in the family in 1991 (Table 2).¹¹ This is comparable to the rate of language maintenance in Alberta.¹²

Table 2: German speakers as a mother tongue and home language, by age groups

	German Mother Tongue	German Home Language	Language Maintenance
0-4	2,245	1,925	86%
5-14	4,690	2,960	63%
15-17	1,590	780	49%
18-24	4,480	1,810	40%
25-34	8,750	2,610	30%
35-44	9,585	2,115	22%
45-54	9,560	2,090	22%
55-64	9,790	2,820	29%
65+	12,955	5,680	44%
Total	63,495	22,765	36%

Across the province parents overwhelmingly indicated that their children up to 4 years of age who had learned German as their mother tongue also used it as their home language (86%); but for those between the ages of 5 and 14, the claimed language retention rate dropped to 63%, between 15 and 24 to 43%, with another 13% drop over the next ten-year age group. Between the ages of 35 and 64 the language maintenance ratio ranged between .22 and .29, and rose to .44 for the population 65 years of age and beyond.

The German-speaking population of Manitoba has aged rapidly (Table 3). This can be seen in a comparison of the age distribution of Manitobans with German mother tongue and the age distribution of the Manitoba population at large. Up to the age of 35 there were fewer Manitobans in each age group with German mother tongue than in the general population, but from 45 years of age and upwards the

older Manitobans with German mother tongue accounted for a larger portion of the population. While 55% of the population of Manitoba at large was 34 years or younger, the corresponding percentage for Manitobans with German mother tongue was only 35%. On the other hand, Manitobans beyond the age of 44 accounted for 32% of the total population, while of those with German mother tongue in Manitoba 50% were 45 and older.

Table 3: Distribution of Manitoba's population and German speakers, by age groups

	German Mother Tongue	German Home Language	Total Population
0-4	4%	9%	8%
5-14	7%	13%	15%
15-24	10%	11%	15%
25-34	14%	12%	17%
35-44	15%	9%	15%
45-54	15%	9%	10%
55-64	15%	12%	9%
65+	20%	25%	13%

The ageing of the German-speaking community becomes even more striking when German as a home language is used as the criterion. Among Manitobans with German home language, as many as one quarter were at least 65 years old, whereas the corresponding percentage for the population at large was only 13%. The younger age groups resembled the general population more closely in their distribution, although even there the German-speaking cohort was smaller than the provincial average.

German Speakers Across Census Divisions

Next we consider German as a Mother Tongue and as a Home Language. There were Manitobans in all census divisions who had learned German as their first language, but the groups varied greatly in size. In Census Division 21, for example, which includes The Pas in mid-northern Manitoba, there were 160 speakers with German mother tongue; in Census Division 23, which comprises the far north of the province, only 60 German mother tongue speakers were recorded.

In other areas of the province, German as a mother tongue takes a much more prominent place. The areas having the most German mother tongue speakers were Winnipeg with 22,555 persons, Census Division 3, which includes Morden, Winkler, Altona and the rural municipalities of Rhineland and Stanley just north of the American border (in essence the West Reserve) with 13,690 people, and Census In

Division 2, an area southeast of Winnipeg comprising Steinbach and Hanover (substantially the East Reserve), which counted 9,510 residents with German mother tongue. In addition, there were another eight census divisions with more than 1,000 individuals who had learned German as their mother tongue.

The 22,765 Manitobans who said that they used German in the home were also unevenly distributed throughout the province. Of course, there were many census subdivisions and enumeration areas where not a single person who used German in the home was reported; this was the case in 74% of the approximately 1,300 census enumeration areas (Table 4). In only three enumeration areas (EA) did more than half the inhabitants use German in the home, viz. in enumeration area 52 of the rural municipality (RM) Portage la Prairie (total population count: 155); in another such enumeration area in the town of Winkler (population of 820), and in EA 13 in the rural municipality of Cartier just west of Winnipeg (population count of 1,355). In the first-mentioned small region (the location of the Elm River Hutterite colony) virtually everyone across all age groups spoke German as the home language. In that part of the town of Winkler and the RM of Cartier large numbers from small children through middle age and, especially, the population 65 years and older reported using German in the home as the primary language of communication.

Table 4: Language Maintenance in Selected Enumeration Areas, by Age Groups

	EA 52 in Portage RM	EA 13 in Winkler	EA 13 in Cartier RM
0-4	100%	57%	72%
5-14	100%	54%	58%
15-17	100%	60%	50%
18-24	100%	33%	54%
25-34	75%	40%	56%
35-44	75%	50%	48%
45-54	100%	20%	31%
55-64	100%	63%	35%
65+	100%	76%	75%
Total	94%	60%	53%

another sixteen enumeration areas, between one third and one half of the population used German as the primary language of the home, and in another forty enumeration areas between 20% and 33% used German as the home language. It is of note that nowhere in Winnipeg was German spoken more often as the home language than English was, but in two enumeration areas *c.* 20% of the population did report speaking German at home.

The greatest number of German home language speakers was found in Census Division 3 with 5,945 such individuals, followed by Winnipeg with 4,895 and Census Division 2 [encompassing the rural municipality of Hanover (1,315), the town of

Steinbach (895), and the village of Niverville (235)] with 3,440 people.

In the northern census divisions listed above which reported a number of Manitobans with German mother tongue, there were either no persons or hardly any who still used German as their home language. In Census Division 20 (Swan River and environs) only 25 of 365 persons who had acquired German as their mother tongue still used German in the home. In Census Division 21, none of the 160 mother tongue speakers spoke German as his/her home language any longer. In Census Division 22 north of Lake Winnipeg none of 525 individuals still spoke German in the home, and in Census Division 23 (northern Manitoba), of the 60 individuals who had learned German as a first language none still spoke it in the home.

In Census Division 3, most German language speakers can be found in Winkler (1,265), the rural municipalities of Rhineland (1,125) and Stanley (1,055), and in Altona (645) and Morden (420). In Census Division 10, the rural municipality of Cartier halfway between Portage and Winnipeg was the location of 1,070 German home language speakers.

Of course, not everyone in these places necessarily has German as a mother tongue or home language. In 1991 Steinbach, for example, had a total population of 8,040 of whom 2,925 persons, 36%, claimed German as their mother tongue, yet only 11% spoke German in the home (Table 5). In Winkler, a visitor is somewhat more likely to encounter German being spoken as a home language (20% of the population spoke German at home in 1991). Certain rural areas of the province boast an especially high percentage of German speakers, as for example in Stanley RM, Rhineland RM, and Cartier RM.

Table 5: German-Speakers as a Percentage of the Total Population in Selected Census Subdivisions

	Total Population	German Mother Tongue	Percentage MT/Total	German Home Language	Percentage HL/Total
Steinbach	8,040	2,925	36.4%	895	11.1%
Hanover	8,850	3,605	40.7%	1,315	14.9%
Niverville	1,515	550	36.3%	235	15.5%
Stanley RM	4,565	2,390	52.4%	1,055	23.1%
Rhineland RM	4,150	2,310	55.7%	1,125	27.1%
Altona	3,005	1,400	46.6%	645	21.5%
Winkler	6,220	3,180	51.1%	1,265	20.3%
Morden	5,245	1,180	22.5%	420	8.0%
Cartier RM	3,120	1,175	37.7%	1,070	34.3%
Whitewater RM	825	105	12.7%	100	12.1%
S. Cypress RM	875	180	20.6%	205	23.4%

German Language Maintenance in Selected Census Divisions

The rate at which German mother tongue speakers are using this language in the home varies greatly by age groups. The highest ratio of German language maintenance can be observed in the RM of Cartier (91%), in the RM of Clanwilliam north of Brandon (100%), in the RM of South Cypress southeast of Brandon (114%),¹³ and the RM of Whitewater south of Brandon (95%). Areas where German was used frequently as a mother tongue, such as in Winnipeg, Steinbach, Niverville, Altona, Winkler, the RM of Stanley, etc. showed much lower language maintenance ratios. Details are presented below.

In Winnipeg (Census Division 11), the relative proportions of mother tongue speakers and persons who use German as their home language differ considerably in the various age groups. Here the absolute numbers of speakers of German as a home language vary between about 250 and 400 per age group, except for the 65+ age group, but the proportion of those 18 and older who actually use German as a home language is substantially smaller, accounting for only 10% to 20% of the respective totals. In the 65 and above age group, about 33% of those who had acquired German as their mother tongue still reported using German in the home.

Especially noteworthy was the small number of German home language speakers between 5 and 17 in Winnipeg (viz. 265). Given the small numbers of Winnipeg's children who reported to have acquired German as their mother tongue and the low German language maintenance rates among young and middle-aged people, the future of German as a home language in Winnipeg looks bleak indeed.

A comparable if slightly less bleak picture emerges for German language maintenance in the Census Divisions 2 and 3 where there are large Mennonite populations. In Census Division 2, encompassing Steinbach, Hanover, Niverville and areas south and east, there were 9,510 German mother tongue speakers, of whom 3,440 also spoke German in the home (a language maintenance ratio of approximately 36%). Here, c.250 to 300 individuals in each ten-year age group, except those 65 years of age and older, reported using German in the home, irrespective of the number of persons in each group who had learned German as their mother tongue.

The low rate of home language use is especially apparent in the 25 to 54 age groups. On the other hand, among the oldest residents in Census Division 2 with German as the mother tongue more than half still used German at home. Clearly, German is still a factor in this region among young people, though much less so than a generation or so ago.

A very similar distribution of German home language use among German mother tongue speakers was found in Census Division 3 (the former West Reserve) where the numbers of German home language speakers in the age groups below 65 ranged between 400 and 600; in the age group of 65 and above almost 1,900 (about 63%) still used German in the home. In other words, there are hundreds of young people (even more than in Census Division 2) who are using German in the home in southern Manitoba, and for whom it is therefore a living language.

The ratios between German mother tongue and German home languages use in Census Division 8 are quite different (Fig. 5). In this area west of Portage la Prairie (which includes rural municipalities such as North and South Norfolk and Westbourne with eight Hutterite colonies), the ratios between German mother tongue and German home language use are much higher; similar patterns can be observed in other rural census divisions to the west of Winnipeg. In Census Division 8 there were 2,320 persons who had acquired German as their mother tongue, and 1,415 still used German in the home in 1991 — a language maintenance ratio of ca. 60%. When compared to the Mennonite-dominated census divisions, the language maintenance rates among children and young people are very high, averaging more than 80%. Only from the late 1920s on does the language maintenance drop to around 50%; noteworthy is the fact that among persons 65 years old and older, German language maintenance is lower than among the Mennonites.

German language maintenance rates can also be determined for clusters of enumeration areas. For example, in the Souris River Hutterite Colony there were 105 speakers of German as a mother tongue according to the 1991 Census; 100 also reported using German in the home. Although the numbers per ten-year age group were, of course, small, they showed virtually 100% language maintenance. In enumeration area 52 (the site of the Elm River Colony near Portage which reported a total population of 155), 145 of those 155 persons with German mother tongue also spoke German at home, yielding a language maintenance ratio of 94%. Other enumeration areas with high German language maintenance ratios in various age groups were to be found in the following Hutterite colonies: Brightstone Colony near Thalberg; Glenway Colony near the Roseau River; the Crystal Springs and Suncrest Colonies south of Niverville; Trileaf Colony near Baldur; Maple Grove Colony north of Melita; Iberville Colony near St. Eustache; and Broad Valley Colony in the north near Arborg.

Table 6 illustrates the widely differing language maintenance ratios for various urban and rural areas of the province.

Table 6. German as a Mother Tongue and Home Language in Selected Census Regions by Age Groups

	Total	0-4	5-14	15-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Town of Steinbach										
Home Language	895	15	0	10	15	10	75	80	150	540
Mother Tongue	2,925	40	120	45	240	375	415	360	390	930
Percentage	31%	38%	0%	22%	6%	3%	18%	22%	39%	58%
Hanover RM										
Home Language	1,315	110	165	45	100	145	130	130	140	350
Mother Tongue	3,605	110	335	155	320	575	665	565	385	505
Percentage	37%	100%	49%	29%	31%	25%	20%	23%	36%	69%

	Total	0-4	5-14	15-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Village of Niverville										
Home Language	235	20	10	0	10	40	10	20	25	110
Mother Tongue	550	20	40	15	50	95	95	75	60	90
Percentage	43%	100%	25%	0%	20%	42%	11%	27%	42%	122%
Stanley RM										
Home Language	1,055	85	160	45	80	130	200	145	150	90
Mother Tongue	2,390	115	430	170	225	340	425	320	195	170
Percentage	44%	74%	37%	27%	36%	38%	47%	45%	77%	53%
Rhineland RM										
Home Language	1,125	80	170	65	100	115	160	130	180	145
Mother Tongue	2,310	130	395	135	195	325	345	335	265	210
Percentage	49%	62%	43%	48%	51%	35%	46%	39%	68%	69%
Town of Altona										
Home Language	645	15	25	0	25	65	10	45	95	385
Mother Tongue	1,400	40	65	25	90	175	170	150	160	505
Percent	46%	38%	39%	0%	28%	37%	6%	30%	59%	76%
Town of Winkler										
Home Language	1,265	70	80	15	55	120	90	65	155	625
Mother Tongue	3,180	100	235	75	265	410	440	310	335	1,005
Percent	40%	70%	34%	20%	21%	29%	21%	21%	46%	62%
Town of Morden										
Home Language	420	35	45	0	25	40	25	0	65	195
Mother Tongue	1,180	20	25	10	65	135	165	170	195	425
Percent	36%	175%	180%	0%	39%	30%	15%	0%	33%	46%
Cartier RM										
Home Language	1,070	175	225	60	130	190	130	90	45	40
Mother Tongue	1,175	170	230	60	135	210	135	115	70	45
Percent	91%	103%	98%	100%	96%	91%	96%	78%	64%	89%
Whitewater RM										
Home Language	100	15	30	0	15	15	10	0	10	10
Mother Tongue	105	15	30	5	10	15	15	0	0	5
Percent	95%	100%	100%	0%	150%	100%	67%	0%	-	20%
South Cypress RM										
Home Language	205	40	55	10	15	20	30	10	10	30
Mother Tongue	180	30	35	10	10	20	20	20	10	10
Percent	114%	133%	157%	100%	150%	100%	150%	50%	100%	300%

Conclusions

It is a widely held view that Manitoba has a large German-speaking population with a long history. The fact that 67,975 Manitobans (6.3% of the total population) claimed German as their mother tongue in the 1991 Census certainly seems to confirm this impression (the less meaningful criterion of "ethnic origin" points to an even larger share of the population with "German" origins: viz. 93,995).¹⁴ What is perhaps less well-known is the fact that the German language is rapidly disappearing as a language of communication — more so in some regions than in others — paralleling the decline in the number of speakers of German in other provinces.

Two large areas in the south and southeast of the province are identified with the German-speaking Mennonite settlements of the 1870s and subsequent periods, but German is also widely used in Winnipeg and in many rural areas, especially to the west of the city in the thriving Hutterite colonies. It is here where German is flourishing both as a mother tongue and as a home language, while in the traditional Mennonite areas (where according to the 1991 Census 52% of the population claimed German mother tongue) a sharp decline in German language maintenance, especially in the younger age groups, may be observed.

The Mennonite community has been aware of the decline of German language and culture since the 1940s and has taken various measures to try to counteract this trend, but the last thirty years have seen the slow disappearance of German in its midst. While it is true that German is still used regularly in families and in business encounters, the data show that language maintenance among the young is diminishing rapidly and that as the German-speaking population ages, German will not be used as frequently as a home language and therefore cannot remain as the mother tongue for the next generation.

In Alberta, German language maintenance was found to be lowest in the large urban areas, followed by areas with ethnic German immigrants from Russia, Poland and other parts of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was highest in the rural areas that have large Hutterite populations, with age being an additional determinant (Prokop, 1989, p. 82 ff). A similar development may be observed in Manitoba. The large urban area (i.e., Winnipeg) is showing the lowest language maintenance: the traditionally Mennonite towns, villages, and rural municipalities (e.g., Steinbach, Winkler, Altona, Rhineland and Stanley) are recording substantially higher language retention (with the very young and the old reporting highest language maintenance). And those areas where Hutterite colonies were identified (e.g., in Cartier RM, Whitewater RM and South Cypress RM) recorded the highest German language maintenance, regardless of the age group. In the more remote northern areas of the province German as a home language has virtually disappeared.

In Winnipeg, the number of German home language speakers is virtually flat across all age groups. Considering the fact that German language maintenance in urban areas has been shown to be low in any case, how many of the c. 900 children up to the age of 17 will be likely to use German as a home language in ten years? How many will later intermarry with other language groups and will therefore be

unlikely to have German as the home language, which means that even fewer children will grow up with German as their mother tongue, and so on.

And yet, German is still an audible presence in the Mennonite areas, where about 20% of the total population still reports using German as the primary language of the home: in other words, a casual observer is very likely to hear German spoken in the street or in businesses, especially by the older generation. In the Hutterite colonies the German language continues to grow and flourish. In 1991 38% of the Hutterite population of Manitoba (2,845 persons) was 15 years of age or less, compared with 26% of the Mennonites (N=16,995) and 22% of the total population of Manitoba (239,500 persons). Another 19% (1,435) of the Hutterite population was between 15 and 24 years of age compared to 16% and 15%, respectively, of the Mennonites and the total population of Manitoba. Considering language maintenance ratios of .80 among the young Hutterites, these numbers will guarantee a relatively small but persistent German-speaking presence in Manitoba.

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Notes

¹ Mother tongue is defined by the Census as "the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census. For a child who has not yet learned a language, the language is reported that is used most often at home." (*1991 Census*, 93-317), 5.

² *1991 Census*, 93-313, Table 2.

³ Home language is "the language spoken most often at home." (*1991 Census*, 93-317), 5. More than one language may be spoken at home, but the home language is the language spoken most often.

⁴ See Note 14 in Prokop (1998) on the difficulties of interpreting Census data.

⁵ An enumeration area is defined as the geographic area covered by one census representative. (*1991 Census*, 92-301 E), 19.

⁶ *1991 Census 1991*, 93-317, Table 5. All data are single responses.

⁷ *1991 Census*, 93-317, Table 2.

⁸ *1991 Census*, 93-319, Table 1.

⁹ *1991 Census*, 93-319, Table 7.

¹⁰ See Ryan (1977, pp. 278 ff.) for the names and locations of Hutterite colonies in Manitoba.

¹¹ The Census data available for this analysis do not table mother tongue and home language of the same speaker, but only give totals for each group. It is possible therefore that in an area where newcomers had not learned German as their mother tongue but had in the meantime acquired it as their home language, the number of German mother tongue speakers may be smaller than those using German as their home. This was in fact the case in several small census subdivisions language (for example, Whitewater RM and South Cypress RM; see Table 4). Table 5 of the *1991 Canada Census* (93-317) cross-tabulates provincial totals: Of the 67,975 Manitobans with German mother tongue 22,400 spoke an unofficial language in the home; in most cases, this was likely to have been German. Table 2, on the other hand reports 63,495 German mother tongue users and Table 5 gives 22,765 German home language speakers. The language maintenance ratio for this group therefore is 33% while the data obtained from the separate tables yield a ratio of 36%.

¹² Prokop, 1989, 65 ff.

¹³ In some cases, there were more German home language speakers than persons with German mother tongue. This fact is either due to the Census= rounding numbers off to the nearest 0 or 5 digit, or to some German home language speakers moving to the colony, or to both.

¹⁴As 52% of the Mennonites claimed German mother tongue in the 1991 Census and virtually all Hutterites will have learned German as their first language it may be estimated that only about 26,300 (or 39%) of the ca. 68,000 German speakers are non-Mennonites and non-Hutterites.