

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

A SURVEY INVESTIGATING VARIATIONS IN  
ACCULTURATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

BY

LOIS BRITTON

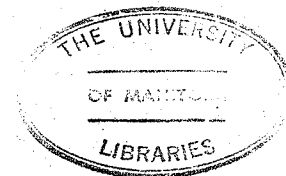
A THESIS

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
I.	The Setting .....	1
II.	Variations in Acculturation .....	12
	The Hypotheses .....	28
III.	Methodology .....	29
	Population Studied .....	29
	Data Collection .....	29
	Interviewers .....	31
	Instruments .....	32
IV.	Findings .....	42
	Modernity .....	44
	Educational Acculturation .....	46
	Consumer Acculturation .....	49
	Political Acculturation .....	50
V.	Summary and Discussion .....	53
	Suggestions for Further Research .....	56
	Appendix A Questionnaire .....	59
	Appendix B Criterion for Internal Consistency .....	72
	References .....	73

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Frequency Distribution: Level of Education .....	35
2. Frequency Distribution: Contact with School Children .....	38
3. Frequency Distribution: Length of Residence in Inuvik .....	39
4. Frequency Distribution: Occupational Involvement .....	41
5. Intercorrelations Between Measures of Acculturation Modernity, Political, Education, Consumer .....	43
6. Intercorrelations Between Modernity and the Independent Variables .....	44
7. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Variables and Modernity .....	46
8. Intercorrelations Between Educational Acculturation and the Independent Variables .....	47
9. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Variables, and Educational Acculturation .....	48
10. Intercorrelations Between Consumer Acculturation and the Independent Variables .....	48

Table

11.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Variables, and Consumer Acculturation .....	49
12.	Intercorrelations Between Political Acculturation and the Independent Variables .....	50
13.	Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis, Independent Variables, and Political Acculturation .....	51

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## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the acculturation of indigenous women located in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The process of acculturation is conceptualized in terms of individual modernity as defined by Inkeles as well as in terms of educational, political, and consumer acculturation.

Research indicates that acculturation is dependent upon several factors such as level of education, English language facility, length of residence, occupational involvement, contact with school children, and native cultural identity. The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between the independent variables, and each of the four types of acculturation. A step-wise multiple regression analysis was used to assess the degree to which each of the independent variables accounted for variations in each of the four types of acculturation.

Findings indicated that the six independent variables have a differing impact on the four measures of acculturation. English language proficiency and positive ethnic identities accounted for most of the variance in modernity, educational and political acculturation. But employment and degree of school contact emerged as the better predictors of consumer acculturation.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SETTING

Theories of social change postulate that in changing from a subsistence type of economy to an industrial economy, family patterns are altered such that males and females may direct their activities to other institutions. The family becomes a more specialized agency, and functions once performed by it are incorporated into the economic, political, educational, and recreational institutions of a "new" system.

The subsistence type economy of the northern natives of Canada, in which sex, and age were the main determinents of social organization, began to take a new form once contact was made with western culture. Social roles changed drastically; those people who had been independent producers became specialists linked to a larger social system for survival (Honnigman and Honnigman, 1972).

White contact took place in three phases; the whaling economy, the trapping economy, and the settlement in white communities. Contact with the whalers brought about demographic as well as social change for the Eskimos (Peake, 1966). During this period the Eskimo people gave up their economic independence for a symbiotic relationship with the larger society, and in the process, accepted many of its values. During the period of the trapping economy, the Indians and Eskimos participated intensely in the economics of the larger society, and acquired many of its material values, while simultaneously being able to sustain themselves from the land.



When fur prices dropped drastically after World War II, people found that specialization in one occupation put them in an imperiled position. However with the construction of the DEW Line site beginning in 1955, and the building of Inuvik in the late 1950's a number of jobs were provided. Most of these were filled by the Eskimos. As Honigmann and Honigmann claim:

The decline of trapping, hunting, and fishing, and sedentary life in towns are the changes that strike the native people as the most remarkable of this period (Honigmann and Honnigmann, 1972: 52).

It was during the transition from trapping to town settlement that the MacKenzie Delta developed a modern frontier culture (Osgoode, 1936). Frontier culture refers to the way of life followed by most Indians, Eskimos, Metis, and some non-natives. It is practiced in two ways. First, it consists of an assortment of outdoor activities. The values which people place on these activities can often interfere with other obligations associated with a modern culture. Secondly, people rely on informal rather than formal organizations to get things done. The formation of this culture owes much to the bifurcation of Delta society that grew steadily sharper as the non-native population became divided by occupational roles associated with different degrees of skill and education. The spread of Euro-American traits throughout the native ethnic groups slowed down and, as a result, the Delta population became divided into two culturally distinct strata: a predominantly non-native group who were committed to the values of the dominant society; and the Indians, Eskimos, Metis, and a few non-natives who

cultivated a new life-style which deviated from both the dominant and aboriginal cultures (Honigmann and Honigmann, 1972).

The decline in trapping coupled with the inflation that occurred after 1948, and the fact that most of the Eskimo population was afflicted by tuberculosis created deplorable conditions for the indigenous population. It was at this time that the Canadian government decided that something should be done. (Jeuness, 1957) "The ideal embodied in government plans, and programs was to bring about a standard of living, level of education, and conditions of health in the North that approach those found in Canada as a whole." (Honigmann and Honigmann, 1970: 51) Nursing stations and schools were built. Health measures included a concerted attack on tuberculosis.

During this period natives left the small settlements that had grown up in locations which suited the needs of the fur trade but did not satisfy the demands of aviation on which northern administration and medical care of the indigenous population depend. They moved into the more populous areas such as Tukloyaktuk, Coppermine, Aklavik, and Ft. Mcpherson, and laterly to Inuvik.

#### INUVIK

Behaviour patterns which have evolved in a primitive society, such as those of the Indians, and Eskimos who lived off the land in the Arctic, die hard. Many of the older people living in Inuvik lived off the land prior to becoming residents of the "instant" town. It was founded in 1955 as an administrative, and educational centre for Canada's Western Arctic. It was judged superior to Aklavik which was

already established on the western side of the Delta. Inuvik is situated on the east side of the MacKenzie River Delta, about 130 miles north of the Arctic Circle, and about 80 miles south of the Beaufort Sea. Advantages of the Inuvik site included a large level area above flood level, availability of gravel for construction, and good potential locations for an airport and landing strip (Diand: 1972). It was thought that most of the inhabitants of Aklavik would move to Inuvik away from the dangers of flood, but this was not the case.

Individuals first moved to Inuvik to work on the construction of the town and then sought continued employment in order to be close to health, and educational facilities. The building of the town provided employment for trappers, especially Indians, and Metis who did not participate in DEW Line construction. When DEW Line construction was completed in November 1956, Eskimos also came to Inuvik or to construction jobs at the airport just outside of Inuvik (Honigmann and Hongmann, 1970). By 1959, about 285 persons of native descent had settled in Inuvik, half of whom had formerly lived in Aklavik.

In a sense, the establishment of Inuvik constituted an elaborate experiment, in the words of one observer, "it was consciously designed to demonstrate the possibility of building a northern town with as many of the features of our urban civilization as possible." (Cooper, 1967: 12). Inuvik has most of the services, and facilities found in any sizeable southern community, and even a few which are not (Parsons: 1970, p. 7).

It has been suggested that the site seems to have been selected more on the basis of technological, and engineering feasibilities than on consideration of the needs expressed by the native population. Many still feel the move would have been more acceptable to the local people if Inuvik had been located on the West Channel near adequate fish, game,

and fur resources. The present location creates problems for the native people since such resources are inadequate, thus forcing them to depend for subsistence upon either wage-labour or welfare assistance (Erwin: 1969).

The town of Inuvik with a population of approximately 2,800 includes structures found in most southern towns; these include town administration, schools, churches, medical services, business, and voluntary organizations. It was for this reason the town of Inuvik was chosen for the location of this study.

Inuvik has had a Town Council since 1967 which is responsible for carrying out local administration. It is comprised of a mayor, and six councillors, and is one of the most important groups in town allowing for citizen participation in local government.

Inuvik's infrastructure is more extensive than some southern towns. It is composed of both fire, and police departments, air, and marine facilities, and water, and sewage systems. Electricity is produced by The Northern Canada Power Commission. Residents of Inuvik have access to three airlines with scheduled flights into Inuvik as well as two airlines which are based in Inuvik. In addition there are six helicopter companies based in Inuvik, and three companies which provide water transport up the Mackenzie River to Hay River, and down to points on the Mackenzie Delta as far as Tuktoyaktuk. There is a fairly extensive local road network, however, none of the roads lead to the outside.

A child living in Inuvik can obtain all his elementary, and high school education in the town. There is a large primary

school, Sir Alexander Mackenzie which houses grades kindergarden through grade six, and Samuel Hearne High School with grades seven to twelve inclusive. Indeed, a child living in Inuvik may even attend nursery school as there is a private nursery school operating there. There is the opportunity for adults to take various adult education courses ranging from basic upgrading to university courses offered through the extension department of the University of Alberta.

The churches in Inuvik are Anglican, Baha'i, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic.

Medical services available to residents include a large hospital with five doctors, and two dentists. It is not necessary for individuals to leave the community for surgery unless it requires the services of a specialist. There is a Public Health Clinic which provides the typical services offered in the south such as well baby clinics, immunization shots, information on venereal disease, and family planning.

Commercial establishments in the town offer modern consumer goods, and services. Included among them are a Hudson Bay supermarket, and department store, another fairly large size supermarket, several smaller retail outlets of different kinds, taxi firms, a service station, barber shop, hairdresser, movie theatre, two hotels, and several restaurants including a Steak House, Chinese food, and an "A and W".

Residents of Inuvik have access to the local, national, and international news through both the C.B.C. radio, and television, with the television programming coming from Vancouver via Anik. There is

a local C.B.C. radio station, and newspapers are flown in from the south, and from other centres in the Territories. In addition, there is a weekly newspaper, The Drum, published in Inuvik. Communication is further augmented by Ministry of Transport, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police radio communication, and daily mail service.

There are many voluntary organizations, too numerous to mention. Among them are church-affiliated associations, a Home and School Association, a Housing Co-operative, Women's Institute, Lions Club, and Girl Guides, Brownies, and Boy Scouts.

There is a community hall in the arena complex with a hall capacity of five hundred. Recreational activities such as bingos, sports events, and festivals are often held in this complex. The Inuvik Centennial Library which houses the Northwest Territories Library Service also provides a source of recreation, and an opportunity for people to broaden their horizons.

In terms of residential patterns, Inuvik, roughly speaking consists of two residential areas separated by a business section. The basic physical feature is the dichotomy, created by the differences in housing, and services, between the serviced, and unserviced areas. Due to the extreme cold, and permafrost it is impossible to provide water, sewage, and heating services in the same manner which it is provided in the south. These services are provided to the individuals living in the "serviced" area by means of the utilidor. The utilidor is a large insulated tube, which runs above the ground, enclosing the necessary pipes, and cables to provide water, sewage, and heating services to the residents.

The utilidor is an ever-present critereon establishing the separation not only between the two ends of town, but also between the whites from the services area, and the natives from the unserviced area (Maihot, 1969: 1).

The business core, together with the residential area which lies immediately east, is known as the "serviced area". Public, commercial, and residential buildings in this area are hooked up to the utilidor. Most of the people living in the "serviced area" are government employees, and their families, but there are a sizeable number of business people, employees of private firms, clergymen, and others living in non-government housing attached to the utilidor. A few native people, mostly government employees, and their families live in the east end. It should be pointed out, however, that the Federal Government housing allocation program tends to discriminate against people who are native to Inuvik since it does not provide housing for individuals who are already settled there.

West of the commercial core is the "unserviced area", much of which does not have access to the utilidor. Water and sewer services are provided by trucks. In this area there are primarily three neighbourhoods.

The first consists primarily of low rental houses provided by the government. Low rental houses vary from 512's (five hundred, twelve square feet) to two and three bedroom houses. Local people were eligible for these houses until 1969 when the Central Mortgage and Housing Act was established. The rent for these dwellings varies from two to one hundred dollars per month, dependent upon the total family

size, and income. This plan is being phased out and people are being encouraged to move into public housing.

The second area consists of public housing units which are large two storey three bedroom units with refrigerators, electric stoves, and washers, and dryers. Rent is from sixteen to twenty-five percent of the total family income. This makes the rent prohibitive to young married couples who are both employed, and have no children. Minimum rent is thirty-four dollars per month, but if the head of the household is on social assistance the total economic rent is paid for by the Government of the Northwest Territories. The majority of the local people are not enthused by the phasing out of the low rental housing plan. Most are not prepared to make the transition from these to public housing. Low rental housing resembles the type of home they consider to be part of their life-style.

The third area, Co-op Hill, is an attractive area in which individuals have built their own homes. The original sixteen residents living on Co-op Hill financed their homes through the Housing Co-operative. The houses were prefabricated ranch style bungalows. Since that time more houses have been built in this area, some of them two storey. This is the area where most of the native elite live.

Despite residential segregation, there are opportunities for the native individuals to develop the perspective, and behaviour of a "modern" person. The dominant institutions in Inuvik are "Southern Canadian". The individuals holding dominant positions in the town are white. It is impossible for an individual to live in Inuvik without



participating to some degree in the life of the town. Although not all channels of participation are equally accessible to all individuals, all must interact out of necessity with the dominant white society. No longer being able to depend on hunting for one's livelihood for instance means a dependence on consumer goods. This implies one must become involved in wage employment or interact with the white social assistance officer to obtain money to buy modern consumer goods, and services. Children over the age of six must attend school. If an individual chooses to go to church, he or she will have to interact with a white priest or minister as all the clergy in Inuvik are white.

In this cultural environment native women are presented with opportunities for independent activity which traditionally were not available to them (Cruickshank, 1969). As men become engaged in wage employment, women assume greater responsibility in feeding, and clothing their families. In addition, they are in charge of the economics of running a household, and bear the responsibility of educating their children. Because modern institutions have been imposed upon them, these women experience pressures to become involved in the "white" institutions. This is probably best summarized in a statement made at a United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of Less Developed Areas,:

The burden of reconciling family life with new patterns of urban life rests on women, traditionally the upholders of custom and conservatism in codes of behaviour. More flexibility of mind is demanded of the wife than of the husband. The responsibility of bridging the gap between the old culture patterns and the new ones lies with

women. Little attention has been paid to the need to prepare women for family life change: indeed little is known about the new roles of women in general (United Nations, 1963: 143 as quoted in Cruickshank, 1969).

In summary each individual woman in Inuvik participates to some degree in a modern culture. But the degree to which women adopt a modern perspective, and assume new roles varies. Theories, and research suggest that education, language facility, length of residence, ethnicity, occupational involvement, and contact with school children have an effect on acculturation.

In the succeeding chapter acculturation is defined, and each of the independent variables are discussed in terms of their relationship to various aspects of cultural change. Specific hypotheses are formulated.

## CHAPTER II

### VARIATIONS IN ACCULTURATION

There have been a number of usages, and meanings of terms used to describe the outcome of the contact of peoples with different cultures--acculturation, amalgamation, integration, and assimilation. Milton Gordon (1964) has built on the usages, and nomenclature of others (Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, Melville, J. Herskovits, Robert E. Park, E.W. Burgess, Joseph Fitcher, Arnold Rose), and has isolated what he sees as the major variables in the contact situation and their relationships. Gordon defines acculturation or cultural assimilation as the "change of cultural patterns to those of host society".<sup>1</sup> (Gordon, 1964: 70-71)

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<sup>1</sup>Assimilation is seen by Gordon as a seven-step process, each of the stages or sub-processes constituting a particular stage of the assimilation process. Further, not only is the process a matter of degree, but each of the stages or sub-processes may take place in varying degrees. He suggests that there are two important stages of assimilation - cultural and structural. Cultural assimilation is defined as the "change of cultural patterns to those of host society" and structural assimilation as the "large scale entrance into cliques, clubs and institutions of host society, on primary group level" (M. Gordon, 1964: 70-71).

Cultural or behavioural assimilation is the first assimilation sub-process outlined by Gordon and has been labeled "acculturation". According to Gordon cultural assimilation, or acculturation, is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur. Acculturation of the minority group may take place even when none of the other types of assimilation occurs simultaneously or later. The condition of "acculturation only" may continue indefinitely (M. Gordon, 1964).

This study therefore focuses on acculturation as described

During the process of acculturation individuals' attitudes change such that they become more like those of the dominant modern society. People adopt norms, values, in short, the modern perspective of the dominant group. Furthermore, individuals can take on new roles as they participate in the institutions of the modern society. The modern perspective has been defined by Inkeles and Smith as "A set of attitudes, values, and ways of feeling, and acting presumably of the sort either generated or required for effective participation in a modern society" (Smith and Inkeles, 1966: 353). They found that the same syndrome of attitudes, values, and ways of acting such as openness to new experiences, independence from authority of traditional figures, taking an active part in civic affairs, and a belief in the efficiency of science, and medicine defined the modern person in six developing countries. These personal qualities are assumed to be the end product of both early, and late socialization experiences such as education, urban life, and work in modern organizations (Smith and Inkeles, 1966: 353-372).

It is most significant that the qualities which serve empirically to define a modern person seem not to differ substantially from culture to culture. This means that what defines a person as modern in one country defines him as modern in another. Inkeles' Comparative Socio-Psychological Measure of Individual Modernity therefore has

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by Gordon, but does not deny other forms of assimilation. Gordon further contends that if structural assimilation occurs, it will lead to other kinds of assimilation such as marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behavioural receptional, and civic assimilation.

universalistic applicability. This suggests that although attitudes and behaviour are complex, certain common perspectives, and behaviour will be found among individuals who experience modern sociocultural environments. This seems to occur regardless of other personal or collective differences in perspectives and behaviour.

Inkeles claimed that modern attitudes are related to particular behaviour patterns. At any given education level, the man who was rated as modern on the attitudinal measure possessed personal qualities such that he was likely to have joined volunteer organizations, to have received news from newspapers everyday, to have talked to or written to an official about some public issue, and to have discussed politics with his wife (Inkeles, 1969: 218). These conclusions were based not only on self-reported behaviour but on objective tests of performance as well. (Inkeles, 1969: 223)

Lerner's definition of modernity suggests that the phenomenon includes participation in modern institutions. For example, one could not say that a settlement in the north was modern simply because it had a hospital with the best available up to date equipment. Modernity needs to be considered in terms of people availing themselves of the services. In other words, there must be reciprocity between the individuals, and the institutions.

"It is fairly well established that a systematic relationship between major forms of mobility - physical, social and psychic - is required for a modern participant society". (Lerner 1968: 135).

Acculturation in northern Canada therefore can be defined as