

Biculturalism in Postsecondary Inuit Education

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This study surveys a group of first-semester postsecondary (CEGEP) Inuit students living and studying outside their home communities in the Montreal area. The cultural identity of each student is analyzed at the beginning of the research study and two subgroups of Inuit students are determined. The responses of the two subgroups are compared with each other to sketch a preliminary model of each subgroup of Inuit students. Results of the study argue in favor of the bicultural and bilingual model presented in the literature concerning Aboriginal and minority education and practiced by the Kativik School Board's dual mandate.

The literature on minority and Aboriginal education and biculturalism speaks to the following. First, it stresses the need for minority students to have a solid foundation in their primary culture and language if they are to be successful in their secondary culture contact in school (Annahatak, 1985, 1994; Barnhardt, 1994, 1991; Collier, 1993; Corson, 1992; Cummins, 1986; Degen, 1985; Dumont, 1972; John, 1972; Leavitt, 1991; Oakes, 1988; Ogbu, 1987; Patrick, 1994; Philips, 1972; Roberts, Clifton, & Wiseman, 1989; Trueba, 1988). Second, it points to the need for minority students' educational experiences to be immersed in primary culture values, skills, and information as reflected through culturally sensitive curricula and pedagogy in the school and classroom (Barnhardt, 1990; Corson, 1992; Kleinfeld, 1979; Lipka, 1991; Stairs, 1988, 1994). Moreover, minority students should have a solid foundation and competence in their first language for them to become functionally bilingual and competent in their second language (Cummins, 1984a; Cummins, 1984b). It follows, therefore, that these students will be better equipped to develop competence in their second language as well as in their secondary culture. Therefore, minority students will ideally acquire functional bilingualism and biculturalism through their educational and social contact with the secondary culture.

The current educational situation in Nunavik, northern Quebec, is built on many of the above premises. The dual mandate of the Kativik School Board is to prepare Inuit students to be primarily knowledgeable and successful in their Inuit culture, language, and traditions. In addition, the Board's policies are also designed to equip students with the capacity to be knowledgeable about and successful in the secondary mainstream society. The dual operating mandate of the Board directs "[the school board] ... to 'provide a curriculum that embraces Inuit tradition, culture and language' and to 'prepare students for active participation in the modern world'" (Kativik School Board, 1993, p. 6). The Board documents state that all its activities, services, and development are carried out with this mandate in mind. Research in Kativik School Board schools also suggests the existence of an

Inuit-constructed pedagogy in classrooms taught by Inuit teachers at the primary level.

Eriks-Brophy (1992) and Eriks-Brophy and Crago (1994) drew on longitudinal ethnographic data of grade 1 and kindergarten classes in Nunavik to develop a framework for culturally relevant and appropriate educational interaction patterns in Inuit classrooms. They found that communicative interaction patterns in Inuit classrooms differ from the mainstream model of teacher-student classroom interaction in culturally predictable ways. A match was located between Inuit cultural values and the discourse patterns in Inuit classrooms. They also posit the existence of an Inuit-constructed pedagogy that parallels those found in similar studies concerning other minority group classrooms. The findings of Eriks-Brophy and Crago are corroborated by Corson (1992), Stairs (1988, 1991, 1994) and Lipka (1989, 1991).

Furthermore, a study by Crago, Annahatak, and Ningiuruvik (1993) suggests that communicative interaction patterns in Inuit homes are changing to match those of the mainstream Canadian culture. These researchers analyzed verbal and nonverbal communicative interactions in Inuit families. The patterns were analyzed with reference to patterns of language use also observed in classes attended by the same children. The study reports that language socialization patterns are changing with the passing generations in Inuit society. The younger Inuit mothers are opting to incorporate elements of the dominant southern Canadian patterns into talk with their children, apparently aware that such patterns correspond to those the children experience in school as their own education has increased. With the school responding to the community and the community responding to the expectations of the school, a two-way bicultural and bilingual framework can thus be hypothesized to be in operation.

This presumably leads to less cultural incongruence in the educational and social backgrounds of the students. These Inuit students should be better equipped to adapt to southern society and schooling as a result. Inuit students who attend Kativik School Board schools should, therefore, theoretically attain a functional level of bilingualism and biculturalism by the end of their secondary school studies. This bicultural and bilingual competence should equip Inuit students to undertake the transition and adaptation to postsecondary studies in the "secondary" culture of the south without undue academic, social, or emotional/affective stress.

This article examines the characteristics of first-year postsecondary Inuit students from Nunavik, northern Quebec, as they begin their studies in southern Canadian collegiate institutions. The main research question underlying this study was the following: Will the self-reported cultural identity of individual Inuit students reflect traditional, bicultural, and mainstream Inuit identities? The following hypothesis forms the basis of this article: Based on prior studies in this area and on my professional experience, it was expected that a group of first-semester postsecondary Inuit students from Nunavik, northern Quebec, would demonstrate differences in their individual cultural identities, including traditional, bicultural, and mainstream Inuit students.

Method

This study used a survey method with a sample of first-year Inuit students and followed this group over the course of one academic semester. The students who participated in the study did so on a voluntary basis as this procedure was best suited to my ongoing professional relationship (as a live-in student life animator at the Kativik School Board's first-year college student residence in Montreal) to the students and the Kativik School Board. Voluntary participation was viewed as necessary so that the students would not feel they were being coerced by myself or the Board to participate. The students were drawn from the first-year college (CEGEP) level, and two related subgroups in the Inuit population formed the sample. The first group comprised first-year postsecondary Inuit students studying at a Montreal area English-language CEGEP. The second group were first-year postsecondary Inuit students studying at a French-language Montreal area CEGEP. Both subgroups yielded a total sample of 30 Inuit students at the beginning of the academic semester.

The first section of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered once at the beginning of the study in mid-August 1996. The questionnaires were distributed in a classroom setting during first-year student information sessions organized by the Kativik School Board at which student attendance was compulsory. This first section comprised two parts. The first provided demographic information about the student population. The second provided data regarding the cultural identity of the individual Inuit students. This subsection differentiated those students with a strong sense of primary culture Inuit identity from those with a strong mainstream Canadian identity. This differentiation was based on the self-reports of the students. Students who fell between the two extremes were considered to have a bicultural identity for the purposes of this study. Therefore, it was possible to distinguish three subgroups from the student sample at the outset of the study: traditional, bicultural, and mainstream Canadian Inuit students. This section of the measurement instrument comprised a number of Likert-type rating scales, with the exception of the hard data gathered regarding the demographic background of each participant.

Many of the items in the instrument were based on existing research and literature in this area (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988; Coelho, 1981; Furnham, 1988; Zapf, 1993; Zimmerman, 1995). I conducted tests of face validity with the academic and social counselors who work with postsecondary Inuit students in an attempt to refine the measurement instrument. Pretests of the instrument were conducted on a group of second- and third-year Inuit college students to further refine the instrument.

Results

The data were analyzed using statistical analyses and manipulation of the data to establish statistical significance in the study. This quantitative approach to data analysis provides a solid differentiation between the divergent subgroups of Inuit students with reference to their self-reported cultural identity. The quantitative methods comprise measures of central tendency and the calculation of a one-way ANOVA. However, trends and patterns in the quantitative results are analyzed vis-à-vis current literature in the field, as well as through qualitative insight and

speculation that stems from my experience with the student population. The qualitative methods comprise my subjective opinions, views, and conjecture as one professionally employed in connection with the sample's students. This combination of research analysis methods is chosen to best describe and elucidate the whole scope of this exploratory study. This dual approach to research analysis methodology is intended as a starting point for further research of this nature and may serve as a guide in this respect.

The calculation of a one-way ANOVA for each individual's subset of seven traditional Inuk and seven mainstream Canadian responses yields the following results. The F value of .10 is not high enough to denote a significant difference between the two subsets of questions in 26 of the 30 cases. As the student responses are statistically equal to one another on each 7-question subset for 26 questions, these students are considered to be bicultural for the purposes of this study (bicultural being a mix between a primary cultural identity that is traditional Inuk and a secondary cultural identity that is mainstream Canadian). However, the F value of .10 is high enough in 4 of the 30 cases to denote a significant difference in the individual students' responses to the two 7-question subsections. In each of the four cases the mean score for the mainstream Canadian questions is significantly higher than that of the traditional Inuk questions. These four individuals are considered to be mainstream Canadian for the purposes of this study. The section on cultural identity, therefore, yields two subgroups of individuals. The first subgroup comprises 26 students and is of the bicultural cultural identity. The second comprises four individuals and is of the mainstream Canadian cultural identity.

The second section of the research questionnaire is designed to determine the cultural identity of the student respondents. The students answered 14 questions on Likert-type scales with their responses ranging from 1 to 10 (see Table 1).

When the data are analyzed, responses that fall between 1 and 3 inclusive on the scale are coded as 1, Never. Responses that fall between 4 and 7 inclusive are coded as 2, Sometimes. Those that fall between 8 and 10 inclusive are coded as 3, Always. Students' responses are collapsed to facilitate the exploratory manipulation and statistical analysis of the data.

Responses to three questions about the Inuit cultural identity were high. Students responded strongly to questions concerning many of the basic elements of their culture. They expressed pride and respect for their language, culture, and their Elders' knowledge and wisdom. The students also indicated a clear attachment to the sample's secondary mainstream Canadian culture through their responses to the questions concerning the English language, the school, and the content of the curriculum.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that a large majority of the first-year Inuit students are bicultural in cultural identity. The magnitude of this difference suggests that the likelihood of bicultural Inuit students performing with ease at the postsecondary level as compared with their first-year peers who are traditional Inuk or mainstream Canadian is quite plausible. Of the two subgroups of Inuit students found in this study, the bicultural Inuit students reported a tie to Inuit culture and traditions that is significantly stronger and more vibrant than that of

Table 1. Group Mean Scores for Cultural Identity: Test 1

<i>Traditional/Mainstream Questions</i>	<i>Group Mean Scores</i>
<i>Traditional</i>	
Proud of language and heritage	2.73
Inuttitut with family and friends	2.70
Respect for elders	2.63
Camping in summer and winter	2.07
Raise brothers and sisters	1.97
Radio/television in Inuttitut	1.73
Traditional Inuit skills	1.60
<i>Mainstream</i>	
Look forward to school	2.63
Information and skills learned at school	2.60
Radio/television in English/French	2.53
Second or third language	2.37
Use modern technology	2.13
Play hockey and other sports	2.10
Involved more than one culture	1.60

their mainstream Inuit peers. This finding is consistent with the literature, which shows bicultural students possessing a strong foundation in their primary culture and language in order to support the successful adoption of a secondary culture and language (Annahatak, 1985, 1994; Barnhardt, 1991, 1994; Collier, 1993; Corson, 1992; Cummins, 1986; Degen, 1985; Dumont, 1972; John, 1972; Leavitt, 1991; Oakes, 1988; Ogbu, 1987; Patrick, 1994; Philips, 1972; Roberts et al., 1989; Trueba, 1988). This finding is also consistent with the literature concerning the outcomes of bilingual education strategies (Cummins, 1984a, 1984b). The bicultural students' reported affinity and frequent use of Inuttitut gives them a strong foundation on which to build their second language of choice.

The reported bicultural and bilingual nature of these first-year Inuit students is perhaps due in part to their previous educational experiences in second-language and second-culture classrooms as described by Patrick (1994). His study outlines the reality of present-day Inuit students from northern Quebec having spent much of their educational lives in their home communities being taught by non-Inuit teachers in a second language. Study in a second language and with second-language teachers also presumes study of a secondary culture. The results suggest that both the bicultural and mainstream Inuit students report an affinity to the mainstream culture, language, and curriculum. These components of mainstream Canadian culture are apparently central to the lives of these postsecondary Inuit students.

The bicultural group is open to life in the south, yet maintains a clear connection with the north. They are clearly bicultural in nature and are presumably able to adapt to southern life without much difficulty. The secondary culture of the bicultural Inuit students is, therefore, that of the southern Canadian mainstream. It

is also important to acknowledge the limit in the divergence between the bicultural and the mainstream groups. The lack of extensive significant differences contributes to the sketch of successful bicultural Inuit students: The bicultural students are similar to the mainstream group in all ways but those noted above. Therefore, their secondary culture attachment is also a strong part of their identity.

Limitations of the Study

The present research project is limited in the following areas. The research instrument used in this study does not have reliability and validity measures. The results gleaned from this study are not generalizable to other Aboriginal or minority group postsecondary students. However, this study is exploratory in nature and meant to act as a guide for future research in this area. The methods, instrument, and results are, therefore, pertinent beyond the confines of statistical measures. Second, the limited size of the sample also means that the results of this project are not highly generalizable outside of the research sample and its associated population. Third, as the study's participants were selected on a voluntary basis, those who chose not to participate might have changed the outcome of the study.

Conclusion

This study suggests that most of the first-year postsecondary Inuit students studying in the Montreal area have a bicultural cultural identity. However, it is unclear whether those students who also graduate from Nunavik schools and choose not to pursue a college education have this same bicultural cultural identity. The study questions only a sample of first-year postsecondary level students that is equivalent to a snapshot taken in time. Therefore, it is essential to delve further into the question of the bicultural nature of these first-year and other postsecondary Inuit students.

The literature base on minority education would profit from a study that ascertains the rate at which the transition from primary to secondary culture occurs among Inuit students. Further studies could then be conducted to ascertain any critical factors in this transition. Administrators and educators would then be better equipped to deliver culturally appropriate curricula and pedagogy at crucial times in the development of bicultural students and reinforce their grasp of the primary and secondary cultures. This exploratory research project, therefore, acts as a guide to refine research in this area.

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Appendix A

Section 1.1. Please answer the following questions and/or mark an X next to the option that describes you. Please do not write your name in order to remain anonymous. Thank you.

Age _____ Male _____ Previous Language of Instruction: English _____
 Female _____ French _____

Home Community _____ Mother Tongue _____

Language(s) Spoken _____

Language Spoken at Home _____

Language Spoken with Family Members _____

Language Spoken with Friends _____

Number of Family Members Living in Your Home _____

Family Members Living in Your Home (Check applicable spaces):

Mother _____ Father _____ Brother(s) _____ Sister(s) _____ Aunt(s) _____

Uncle(s) _____ Cousin(s) _____ Grandparent(s) _____ Friend(s) _____

Adopted Family Member(s) _____ Children of Your Own _____

Travel to Other Nunavik Communities (Please check one) Never _____
 1 to 5 times _____ 6 to 10 times _____ More than 10 Times _____

Travel Outside of Nunavik (Please check one) Never _____
 1 to 5 times _____ 6 to 10 times _____ More than 10 times _____

Lived Outside of Nunavik (Please check one) Never _____
 0 to 1 year _____ 1 to 2 years _____ More than 2 years _____

Please Specify Where you Lived (ex. Montreal) _____

Section 1.2: Please read each statement carefully. Circle the number from 1 to 10 (where 1 = never, and 10 = always) that corresponds best to your situation.

Ex: I like to get involved in team sports during the winter months.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never				Sometimes					Always

1. I am proud of my Inuit heritage and language.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never				Sometimes					Always

2. I am an actively involved in more than one culture.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
3. I practice traditional Inuit skills during my spare time.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
4. I use modern technological equipment at school or home.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
5. I respect my elders for their knowledge and wisdom.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
6. I appreciate the information and skills that I learn in school.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
7. I speak Inuttitut with my family and friends.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
8. I am fortunate to learn a second and/or third language in school.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
9. I go camping on weekends and/or during the winter and summer breaks.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
10. I watch and/or listen to English/French television, radio and music.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
11. I listen to and/or watch television, radio and/or music in Inuttitut.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
12. I look forward to attending my school classes throughout the year.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
13. I play hockey and other sports at school or the arena in the North.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always
14. I take part in raising my younger brothers, sisters or cousins.										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Never				Sometimes						Always