

Cherokee Change: A Departure from Lineal Models of Acculturation

BY HARRIET J. KUPFERER

RÉSUMÉ

Pour expliquer les transformations socio-culturelles chez les indiens Cherokee, il semble que l'hypothèse basée sur le modèle linéaire ne suffit pas. Une étude des valeurs nous révèle que les changements culturels ont non seulement cristallisé la distinction entre indiens "conservateurs" et "modernes" mais, que de plus, ils manifestent parmi ces derniers un début de stratification socio-économique propre, jusque-là, aux non-indiens.

This paper¹ raises questions about the adequacy of lineal constructs of acculturation to depict internal differences among North American Indian groups. Implicit in most models of American Indian acculturation seems to be the assumption that "white" culture is homogeneous; therefore, as native people alter their premises, attitudes and behavior, they too, become like the homogeneous "white." For example, Hallowell (1952), Voget (1950, 1951), Bruner (1956) place types or collectivities of Indians on a continuum. At one end of these continua are: "conservative," "traditional," or "native" types, at the other end are "white," "white" oriented or "American" modified. Typical lineal terminology varies but it stresses movement from aboriginal homogeneity through some transitional status to acculturated or "white" homogeneity. George Spindler (1955) also emphasizes lineality, although he separates the most acculturated Menominee into an elite acculturated and a lower status acculturated.

¹ Versions of this paper were read by John J. Honigmann, Arthur J. Rubel and M. Elaine Burgess. Their assistance is appreciated. The field work was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Gulick (1960) and Thomas (1958)² suggest that the Eastern Cherokee might also be analyzed using the cultural gradient model of these other scholars. Consequently research among North Carolina Cherokee was initiated with this as a goal.

From the outset it was obvious that the Cherokee were an exceptionally culturally heterogeneous aggregate of people. There appeared to be a number of Conservative Indians, isolable by their continued use of the aboriginal language and by their continued patronage of native curers. Equally as visible was a small number of highly acculturated and financially successful people who were either employed in responsible Civil Service positions or who were self employed as proprietors of substantial tourist businesses (for example, one man grossed over \$300,000 in 1959-1960). Between these two lay the balance of the population. Unlike the Conservatives, almost all of whom are putatively "full bloods," this in-between population consists of people some of whom are phenotypically white and of others who are phenotypically Indian. To this extent they are quite like the highly acculturated people who also comprise several phenotypes. Very few of them use the Cherokee language by preference although some understand it; and none admit seeking out the services of Indian doctors. In these ways at least, they are similar to the acculturated and "successful" Indians. It was supposed that this large aggregate could be plotted on a continuum in the same way that the Menominee, Crow and Ojibwa have been described.

In undertaking this task it was necessary to select some criterion by which to study the people. Values³ as they can be inferred from overt behavior and from verbalizations were selected as the unit of observation and comparison. From the many definitions and conceptualizations of values the concepts advanced by Goldschmidt and Edgerton (1961:27) best met the needs of this paper.

...they are the behavior patterns, social circumstances and symbolic representations characteristic of a particular culture, in terms of which

² Robert THOMAS (1958) postulated a tentative acculturation gradient: Conservatives; Generalized Indians; Rural White Indians; and Middle Class.

³ For a more extensive discussion of values and other variables see KUPFERER 1961.

its individual members perceive and measure the social standing of their fellow men, and hence these values and their representations serve for each person as a measure of his own social position... they are the subcultural definition of propriety and its symbolic representations.

Our selection of value systems as a fundamental aspect of culture through which to discern cultural differences and cultural change is supported by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:43). Their theory argues that value orientations do change but a distinction must be made between orders of change: "changes which are more of the same thing... and basic changes in the value orientations themselves."⁴ From initial observations of the Cherokee I felt that we should see changes which were not more of the same thing but which represent a very basic and fundamental overhaul in basic premises. My findings sustain this contention. I found that there were two basic value systems in juxtaposition at Cherokee and that one represents a change in kind from the other. I also found that it was not possible to demonstrate a gradation of values from "conservative" to "progressive." Before discussing the implications of these findings for acculturation models I shall supply the data verifying the existence of two almost antipodal value systems.

In order to study these values, observations were made on four arbitrarily selected collectivities of people who seemed to be typical of the diversities in the population. The Conservatives and the most acculturated (Progressives) were logical selections. From the undifferentiated aggregate who seemed to fit neither of these two categories we chose some families who were phenotypically Indians who did not appear to be typically conservative and yet were not like the highly acculturated people. The fourth comprise members of the population who are phenotypically white but who are bona fide members of the tribe. This choice was stimulated by the findings of research suggesting the importance of white models in the family for acculturation (Bruner 1956). The fact that Gulick (1960) and Thomas (1958:127) had recognized a type which they called Rural white Indians was also a factor in this selection.

⁴ Values have also been used in the study of the dynamics of cultural change by CAUDILL and SCARR (1962:53-59).

CHEROKEE VALUE

The examination of these four categories led to the conclusion that there were two dominant value constellations. One is closely related to the descriptions of Weber's Protestant Ethic⁵ (Bendix 1960) and I have borrowed the term Harmony Ethic for the other from Thomas and Gulick.

*Harmony Ethic*⁶

Thomas contends that the Harmony Ethic is central to the Conservative way of life. He says:

According to it, the Conservative tries to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships with his fellow Cherokee by avoiding giving offense... and by giving of himself to his fellow Cherokee in regard to his time and his material goods.

Our notes are replete with data which support Thomas' description of the Conservative values. It is reflected in almost all aspects of Conservative inter-personal behavior and is most predictable in dyadic situations in which one person wishes to affect the behavior of another, for example, making requests, reproaching others and controlling others. An outstanding characteristic of this behavioral syndrome is the use of a *neutral third person* in circumstances which could be conceived of as a threat to amicable relationships.

The role of the go-between is readily obvious in incidents involving requests of one kind or another. School children, including high school students frequently send another pupil to request permission of the teacher to sharpen a pencil or to leave

⁵ KAHL (1956) and FARIS (1960) discuss the relevancy of differing values in understanding class differences in American Society. Faris suggests that the Protestant Ethic typical of the middle class exists in the lower classes also although "scaled down."

⁶ It should be called to the readers' attention that at least one scholar does not define conservative Cherokee behavior in terms of a dominant value system. HOLZINGER (1961:234) says that conservative Cherokee behavior is a neurotic regression to passivity and emotional indifference.

the room. Employers comment upon the same practise among people applying for work. Go-betweens are used in court cases. Local lawyers remarks upon the frequency with which defendants, even those who speak English bring an intermediary to court through whom they attempt to communicate.

This behavior is not confined to contacts with "whites" or to non-kinsman. One informant family was occupying a house rent free which belonged to the wife's aunt. Although the aunt wanted the couple to move she did not ask to have the premises vacated. Eventually she communicated her desire to another, saying, "when I said they could live there, I didn't mean forever." The neutral told the unwelcome tenants that their aunt wanted them to move.

One further example of the indirect method in approaching or reproaching people is seen in the case of an elderly woman whose son drives a taxi for a livelihood. He charges his mother for trips. When I expressed surprise at this she said, "He shouldn't do me that way. I told some of my friends about it down in Cherokee. They have jumped on that boy, for a long time he quit charging me. Now he do it again."

The pattern of using a neutral is so firmly established that when an Indian is confronted with a direct request (which often happens in dealings with "whites") he draws another into the situation if possible. A white employee of the Indian Bureau went to a woman's home to ask her to care for some children up in a remote section of the reservation. She came directly to the point. The woman, Ollie, turned to her brother and spoke with him in Cherokee. After an extended exchange, the brother replied, "She's got a lot to do here — hoe corn, and make the garden — maybe her sister could do it."

When dissatisfactions with people or situations occur and a disinterested party is not available, direct encounters are still avoided. An informant felt that too many demands were being made upon her at work yet she did not mention her discontent to her employer. She simply quit. When I asked her what she told the boss, she said, "I didn't tell him nothing; I just didn't go back to work the next day." Related to this is the fact that

the conservative Cherokee may also quit without notice if he is directly or openly reprimanded by a superior.

Reliance upon indirection is also visible in parental control of children. Generally the children are raised permissively and are seldom coerced unless they step too far out of line. When this occurs an adult tells the child to stop and threatens him by saying that a "booger," a "skilly" or a unega (white person) will get him. Thus a symbolic agent external to the dyadic relationship is introduced. This pattern occurs repeatedly among Conservative parents. Habitual use of an external sanctioning agent does not, however, obviate direct parental interference. Yet when an adult does resort to more direct methods, the action takes place quickly after the child has been told to stop. The general tendency is for the adult to underemphasize himself as the source of authority.

Use of a mediator mirrors the Harmony Ethic in specific behavior. It functions to reduce friction in situations the Cherokee define as potentially threatening to smooth human relationships. Employing a third person removes both actors from the immediate tense circumstances. The method of child control is an aspect of the same principle.

Aggression and aggressiveness are also controlled by the Harmony Ethic. Both are typically lacking in Conservative behavior. Only when people have been drinking does direct physical encounter or quarreling take place. Any account of a fight between two Conservatives always includes a remark to the effect that they were drunk. Just as physical aggression is absent, so is the kind of aggressiveness or single-mindedness necessary for business success absent. Coupled with this poor orientation for careers in commercial enterprise is the premium placed on generosity. This emphasis makes it nearly impossible to accumulate any cash or goods for one is always under pressure to share with those who are temporarily without funds.

Protestant Ethic

With the exception of a few career employees in the department of Indian Affairs, the "progressive" Cherokees are in busi-

ness enterprises. These people reflect the sentiments of the "old middle class" in white society (Kahl 1957:193). Individual responsibility, self discipline and thrift, basic ingredients of the bourgeoisie — are the virtues echoed by this category of Cherokees.

The intermediary is ignored by these people; in fact, he irritates them. School teachers, including those who are Indians discourage the practise among children and employers deplore it. One informant said emphatically, "If I have something on my mind, I speak out." Statements about forthrightness, reliability, and directness reflect the progressive Indians view of what constitutes "proper behavior." They are disturbed by "full bloods" whom they consider to be unreliable and "suspicious" by their standards.

I have spoken of directness as though it were a characteristic confined to the Cherokee "progressives." However, the "Rural White" Indians and "in between" Indians are indistinguishable from the "progressives" in this regard, and all of them are in sharp contrast to the Conservatives.

Self reliance and self discipline are cardinal precepts of the Protestant Ethic. To these qualities the Cherokee "progressives" attribute success and to the lack of these qualities the present status of the Conservative is due. "Persistence and personal effort pay off" said one informant. "My daddy bought this land when it was nothing but an old pasture. Now because we built this business on it and put everything we had into it, some people are jealous." Another maintains that, "I've worked for everything I've ever gotten, if I lost my job tomorrow, I'd go dig ditches or something but I'd never starve to death."

Utterances like these are legion among these people. And nowhere is their basic orientation better seen than in their criticisms of Federal policies toward the Indians. One older informant said, "Why I remember the first time an Indian begged here... and the Government is responsible. The only thing the Government ever did for the Indian was to take away his initiative." A specific government program that is roundly castigated is the Federal Indian Welfare Service. "Progressives" contend that no good will come from welfare programs. "I don't like

this welfare business' asserted one woman. 'There is work if the people would only go to it... they are just going to get big corns on their tails sitting collecting their relief check.'

As individual autonomy and underemphasis of self are the nucleus of the Harmony Ethic, so rugged individualism forms the heart of the Protestant Ethic. It is appropriate to examine the remainder of the Cherokee who are neither conservative nor progressive in terms of self reliance. They present an extremely complex and confused picture. Rural white Indians in no way guide their activities by any aspect of the Conservative value system. But some of them have worked hard all of their lives and are still recipients of public assistance. They verbally endorse the principle of individual effort and personal independence but vary in the extent to which their efforts win them commensurate financial returns. Consequently, although they may cherish the idea of independence some are not able to attain it in fact. Circumstances such as poor health, poor land, and large families conspire to keep them economically depressed. Their faith in the efficacy of hard work is somewhat diminished. They have become resigned to having fewer material goods. Some of these people, for whom diligence and good fortune have combined to provide them with an adequate income for a modest standard of living, cling tenaciously to the central theme of self help. Therefore, within this category there is a continuum both in standard of living and in adherence to the primary values. People at the upper end of the continuum are closer to the successful "progressives" but they have neither the education nor the economic resources to support the style of life of the "progressives" as yet.

Distinguishing the values of Indians in the third category (those who are phenotypically Indian but not conservative) is also a vexing problem. Thomas suggested that although they are inconsistent in the values they verbalize, they behave as if they still believed in the old conservative values. I have no evidence to support this. In many respects the evidence for these Indians is negative; that is to say, we know what they do not say and do. As a group they do not exhibit behaviors which mirror the Harmony Ethic. They do not rely upon an intermediate. They have neither a "wait and see" attitude, nor the initial reticence

which is a constituent of the Harmony Ethic. Parents and children are outgoing in their inter-personal relationships.

Few of these Indians are completely self-employed. Most of them work for an employer, either in some capacity for the Indian Bureau or in local small manufacturing plants. Usually they are reliable employees, although there is occasional absenteeism because of drunkenness. Among those who are self-employed are carpenters, masons, truck drivers and small store owners. To a degree there is a difference among them in the way they handle money. Some are thrifty; others have less regard for the "rainy day". Some have received unemployment compensation or public assistance. But many of them argue against public welfare. They too, are unsympathetic to "hand outs" to the Conservatives. In summary, data on their values are somewhat muddy. My material supports the contention that they are oriented more closely to the Protestant Ethic, despite a few superficial resemblances to conservative ways.

The analysis of values and their attendant behavior demonstrates that the Cherokee cannot be placed in four categories on a continuum from "like Indian to unlike Indian." They can, however, be placed into two categories on the basis of their adherence to one of the two value systems. The Conservatives are clearly a distinct group. The others, who resemble each other far more than they resemble Conservatives, are motivated by the Protestant Ethic. The existence of these two value systems is *evidence of acculturation*; variation among the adherents of the Protestant Ethic suggests that in addition to cultural change other modifications have occurred which a lineal model cannot explain. I suggest that a factor in the difficulty in handling the Cherokee data derives from the attempt to use such a model to conceptualize culture change. Given the historical and demographic circumstances which have existed in connection with the Eastern Cherokee, a cultural gradient is an imprecise tool.

The Cherokee have been encapsulated in a larger white society which has impinged upon them closely and consistently for over a century. This white society is not itself homogeneous. It is characterized by rural-urban differences as well as by social

class differences. White models have included middle class school teachers, missionaries, local long time white mountain settlers as well as anthropologists. Therefore it seems a reasonable hypothesis that acculturation among the Cherokee will involve not only a shift from Indian cultural configurations to white but will also involve shifts toward differing social classes of whites. In short, Cherokee change should reflect the larger sociocultural milieu of which it is a part. We submit that it does and that an *incipient class* structure is a concomitant phenomenon of acculturation.

THE CONTEMPORARY CHEROKEE

Undoubtedly there are conservative Indians. To be sure, they are far from the aboriginal Cherokee, but it is they that most of our data isolate as a distinct cultural category. They stand apart from all the other through their use of Indian doctors, their reliance on the Cherokee language, and by their continued adherence to the Harmony Ethic. Correlates of this ethic ramify into all of their behavior. It is by their behavior that one is best able to identify them.

There is also a large number of people who are phenotypically Indians. They look upon themselves as Indians and are called Indians by the conservatives but they do not act like the latter. I propose to call them *Modern Indians* for while they are Indians according to their concept of self, their orientation is not to the past nor to the traditional cultural identification of "Indianness."

The third category which was selected for study is, as we pointed out, phenotypically white, but the people look upon themselves as Indians despite the fact that Conservatives refer to them as "white Indians." Except for the living conditions of some they do not resemble Conservatives culturally. They bear the greatest cultural resemblance to those we have labeled Modern Indians. Systematic investigation of basic personality might reveal meaningful differences but on the basis of behavior, goals and interests, the two groups are very similar. Therefore, they too, can be categorized as Modern Indians.

Among the "progressives" are people who are either Indian or white in their appearance. In either event, they are far removed from Conservatives in values and in congruent behavior but they are not so distinctly separate from the Modern Indians. Consequently, they also can be classified as Modern Indians. This analysis has led to only two categories distinguished from each other by difference in acculturation. But there are dissimilarities among the Modern Indians which cannot be explained by differential acculturation.

A heuristic approach to the problem of internal differences within the Modern Indians is found in the materials on social stratification and in social class literature. Of the diverse criteria emerging from research on social class — economic position, styles of life and variation in values are pertinent to the Cherokee findings. Use of these variables not only permits the identification of the Conservatives as a distinct cultural group, but also reveals differences among the Modern Indians. These differences I suggest can best be explained by the fact that as acculturation takes place it does so with differing social classes in the larger society acting as the reference groups. Within the Modern Indian category at Cherokee are two classes, a middle class and a lower class. Both of these show a range of variation in their members. The basic difference between the two rests on economic position, occupation, style of life, and some variation in value orientation. The difference is one of degree not kind. Both share similar goals and live by much the same ethic. Therefore Cherokee acculturation is not a matter of becoming less Indian in cultural categories and more like white; it is made more complex by the fact that as Indians acculturate they replicate the class structure to some extent characteristic of the colliding white society.

The Woman's College, University of North Carolina

REFERENCES

BENDIX, REINHARD

1960 Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait. New York, Doubleday.

BRUNER, EDWARD M

1956 Primary Group Experience and the Process of Acculturation. *American Anthropologist* 58:605-623.

- CAUDILL, W., and HARRY SCARR
 1962 Japanese Value Orientation and Culture Change. *Ethnology* 1:53-91.
- FARIS, ROBERT
 1960 The Middle Class from a Sociological Viewpoint. *Social Forces* 39:1-5.
- GOLDSCHMIDT, W., and ROBERT EDGERTON
 1961 A Picture Technique for the Study of Values. *American Anthropologist* 63:26-47.
- GULICK, JOHN
 1960 *Cherokees At The Crossroads*. Chapel Hill, Institute for Research in Social Science.
- HALLOWELL, I.
 1952 Ojibwa Personality and Acculturation. In *Acculturation in The Americas*, ed. by Sol Tax. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- HOLZINGER, CHARLES
 1961 Some Observations on The Persistence of Aboriginal Cherokee Personality Traits. *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 180:229-237.
- KAHL, JOSEPH
 1956 *The American Class Structure*. New York, Rinehart.
- KLUCKHOHN, FLORENCE and FRED STRODTBECK
 1961 *Variation in Value Orientation*. Evanston, Row, Peterson.
- KUPFERER, HARRIET J.
 1960 *The Principal People, 1960: Study of the Cultural and Social Groups of the Eastern Cherokee*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of North Carolina.
- SPINDLER, GEORGE
 1955 *Sociocultural and Psychological Processes in Menominee Acculturation*. University of California Publications in Culture and Society 5.
- THOMAS, ROBERT K.
 1958 *Eastern Cherokee Acculturation*. Manuscript. Chapel Hill, Cross Cultural Laboratory, University of North Carolina.
- VOGET, FRED
 1950 A Shoshone Innovator. *American Anthropologist* 52:53-63.
 1951 Acculturation at Caughnawaga: A Note on the Native Modified Group. *American Anthropologist* 53:220-231.
-