

Social Transition in the North: Document Digitization

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Background

Social Transition in the North (STN), was a four-year research study funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF; OPP-9213137 and OPP-9496351). STN was a longitudinal study analyzing four circumpolar regions, two in Russia (Chukotka and Kamchatka) and two in Alaska (Nana and Aleutian-Pribilof Islands), looking at demographic, epidemiologic, and domestic social transitions (Mason, 2004). Demographic transitions were the study of change in mortality and birth rate. Epidemiologic transitions were studied by watching the change of infectious disease and increase of lifestyle diseases. The third transition was domestic, and is summarized as the redefinition of family, family member roles, and the family's role within the community. The overall goal was to predict future changes, especially of high-risk conditions, and encourage institutional change that would improve services for these conditions.

During the final year of the study, while in the Russian region of Chukotka, the principal investigators, two additional research staff, and 10 villagers, died in a tragic boating accident in September of 1995. It was decided that the documents would be given to the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies (ICHS) where they are now housed.

IRB Oversight

This digitization project was reviewed and approved by the UAA Institutional Review Board. According to the approved IRB protocol:

If researchers are interested in accessing any STN material, a data use agreement will be set in place with the following requirements: to submit an application the UAA IRB, to honor the content of the original consent forms, and in their UAA IRB application specify how they intend to be responsive to the NSF Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic. Further, ICHS will require a copy of UAA IRB's approval prior to release of STN materials.

Therefore, we are not able to deposit the actual STN data in the NSF Arctic Data Center. However, anyone interested in accessing the data can contact:

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Requests can also be sent to the UAA Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies:

Email: uaa_ichs@alaska.edu

Phone: 907-786-6575

STN Data Archive

With funding from NSF, the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies (ICHS) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) created a sustainable archive for the original Social Transition in the North project content. Under supervision of the project PI and a Masters level Research Associate with training in research methods, three UAA undergraduate students scanned, recorded, processed and saved project materials to the password protected UAA-housed secure ICHS shared drive, which is only accessible to ICHS staff.

The archive currently includes approximately 720 surveys, 760 consent forms, 620 Anthropac documents, 430 other study documents, 160 floppy disks, 40 cassettes, 30 microcassettes, and 10 CDs. Currently, there is a single VHS tape and 5-inch floppy that have not been digitized and the files on the floppy disks have not been up-migrated. Because these formats have been obsolete for a considerable amount of time, we have been unable to determine the most appropriate method for processing. Continued assessment and research will be done to make these accessible in an updated format.

Data in the archive has been organized by location, organized into eight Alaska communities (Akutan, Buckland, Deering, Kivalina, Kotzebue, Sand Point, and Unalaska), Russian locations, and unknown locations. For each location we have divided the data into Anthropac triad documents (Alaska locations only), audio files, consent forms, genealogy maps, interview transcripts, and household, demographic, and health surveys. Kotzebue and the Russian locations have some additional health information. Other data includes census records, community maps, genealogy lists, key informant interviews, and kinship charts. Additional documents include the program from the Blessing Ceremony for the Social Transitions in the North Collection, protocols, needs assessments, and STN reports.