

**Transforming Communities:  
Suicide, Relatedness, and Reclamation among Inuit of Nunavut**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is the story of how forms of relatedness in social organization and kinship changed among Inuit after the Canadian government assumed control of their lives. Respect and affection are identified as attributes through which to understand important contexts of relationship among Inuit. Kin and other relations are reviewed before major contact with the Western world, followed by a close look at the dynamics of relational and social change in a number of contexts during the government era after the 1950s. These shifts are readily identifiable in Inuit youth suicide, which as one form of social perturbation can be viewed as a postcolonial disorder. Inuit in Nunavut under the age of 24 have a suicide rate ten times the rate of Canada. This thesis examines the lives of Inuit male youth, and analyzes the relationships – particularly sexual and familial – in which suicidality becomes manifest. The thesis then shifts to the recent efforts by youth to stop the suicides. The activities of youth in this regard represent a reclaiming of collective agency at the community level. The youth implemented programs that, with community support, stopped the suicides for a period of time. Igloolik is one of two communities described that benefited from this social action by youth. The thesis analyzes the successes in this community by tracing the development of a local youth group and its efforts at community action. This thesis is a story of transformation by outside and then by inside forces. In conclusion, the thesis examines some of the struggles of Inuit youth today, and the means by which male youth can become resilient and collective efforts of youth can be sustained into the future.

## Resumé

Cette thèse raconte comment les formes de relation familiale, telles qu'elles participent d'une certaine organisation sociale ainsi que la parenté ont changé chez les Inuits après que le gouvernement canadien se soit approprié le contrôle de leur vie. Le respect et l'affection sont identifiés comme les attributs à travers lesquels on comprend les circonstances importantes des relations familiales. La parenté et les autres relations sont d'abord examinées avant le contact crucial avec la société occidentale; un regard approfondi est ensuite jeté sur la dynamique des changements relationnels et sociaux, dans un certain nombre de situations durant l'ère gouvernementale qui a suivi les années 50. On a facilement associé ces bouleversements au suicide au sein de la jeunesse Inuit; le suicide a été perçu comme l'une des formes manifestant cette perturbation sociale et donc, considéré comme un trouble post-colonial. Au Nunavut, les Inuits de moins de 24 ans connaissent un taux de suicide dix fois supérieur à celui du Canada. Cette thèse examine la vie des jeunes hommes Inuits et analyse les relations (particulièrement sexuelles et familiales) dans lesquelles le suicide semble s'imposer comme une solution indéniable. L'auteur se tourne ensuite vers les récents efforts des jeunes pour mettre fin à cette vague de suicide. Les activités des jeunes à cet égard représentent la reconquête d'un pouvoir d'action collective au niveau de la communauté. Les jeunes ont mis en place des programmes qui, avec le support de la communauté, ont arrêté pour un temps le suicide. Igloolik est l'une des deux communautés décrites qui a bénéficié de l'action sociale des jeunes. La thèse analyse les succès obtenus dans cette communauté en retraçant l'évolution d'un groupe de jeunes de la région, et de ses efforts pour développer une action communautaire. Cet ouvrage est un récit de transformation, d'abord sous l'influence par des forces extérieures puis sous celle de forces intérieures. En conclusion, la thèse examine certaines des difficultés de la jeunesse Inuit aujourd'hui ainsi que les moyens par lesquels les jeunes hommes peuvent développer leur résistance et les efforts collectifs de la jeunesse qui peuvent se poursuivre dans le futur.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction:

#### Igloolik: The Place of Snow Houses

The present ethnography is an investigation into suicide and its prevention among Inuit in Nunavut, the Canadian central and eastern Arctic. It was conducted for nine months during 2004-2005, in the community of Igloolik, Nunavut, where I had previously conducted fieldwork in 1998. This project is a follow-up of the findings from this earlier research (Kral 2003). Methodological details are described in chapter two, however I have been in more or less continuous contact with Iglulingmiut (people of Igloolik) since 1996 and have been working with Inuit on suicide prevention and community wellness since 1994.

In this chapter I review the problem of suicide among Inuit in Nunavut, describe Igloolik today, and then give a detailed account of what is known about Inuit social life in and around Igloolik before significant contact with outsiders, known to Inuit as *Qallunaat*<sup>1</sup>, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The glimpses of what is known about pre-contact life is centred on roles and relationships among Inuit, given the relational focus of this project. The three research questions described below centre on continuity and change in Inuit social relations over the last several decades, as it is hypothesized that

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<sup>1</sup> *Qallunaat* comes from *qallu*, meaning eyebrow, and *naak*, meaning belly. The common interpretation of this term today is people with bushy eyebrows and big stomachs, perhaps deriving from Inuit perceptions of White male visitors, primarily Scottish whalers, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term for a big-bellied person is *naaqqasik* or *naaqqurtujuq*, so it is not clear that the original meaning was “bushy” and “big.” *Qallunaat* first appeared in Parry (1969 [1824]: 553) as *Ka-bloo-nan* and then in Boas (1964 [1888]: 253) as *qadlunait* in the plural, which they both translated as “European,” and is the common term for White people today.

structural family and relational changes lie at the core of current social problems in Nunavut, including suicide. I take a social structural approach to kinship and relational change in this thesis. This has not been investigated in either anthropological or historical research on the colonialism of Indigenous peoples in North America, a serious omission needing to be addressed. The contact period having the most severe impact on Inuit in Canada began with what Wenzel (1991) called “the government era” since the 1950s, which will be described more closely in chapters three and four.

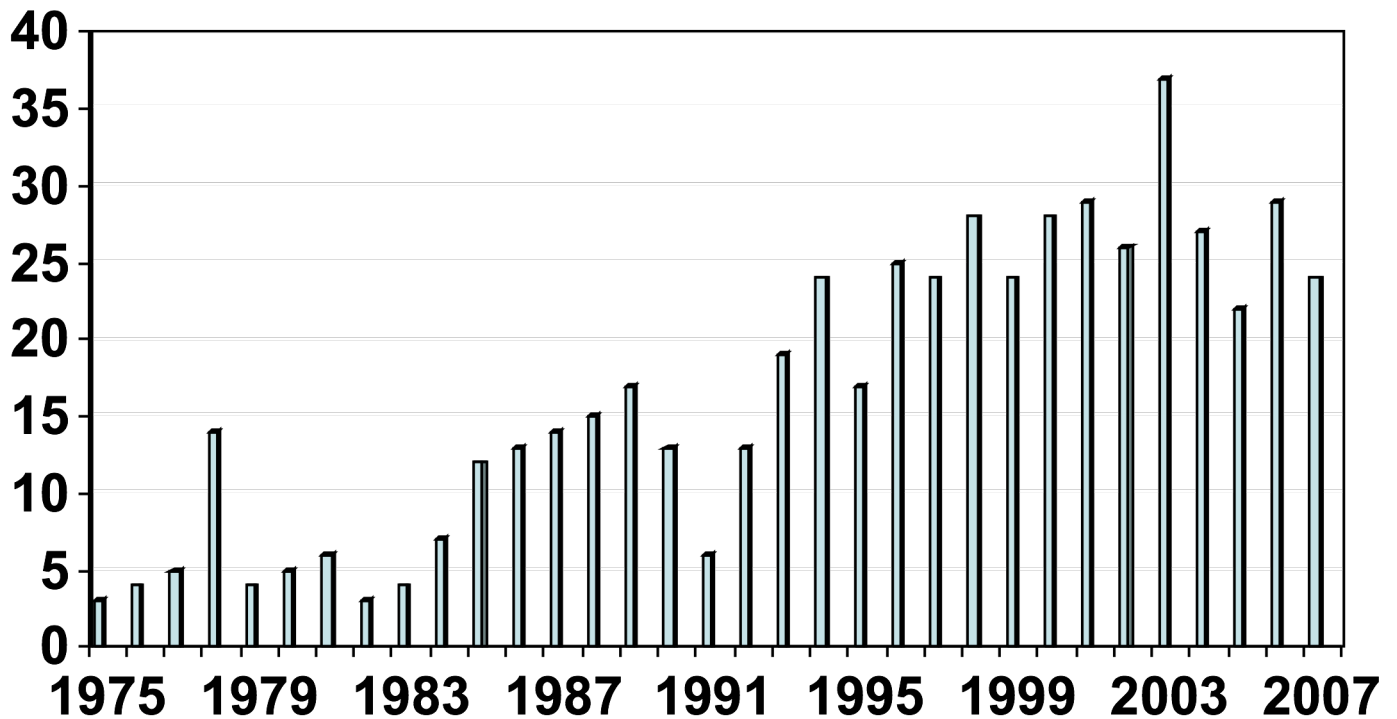
### **Suicide in Nunavut**

Canadian Inuit have among the highest suicide rates in the world, and it is one of the highest rates I have seen recorded for a cultural-geographic population. Almost all the suicides are young people, teenagers or youth in their early 20s. This is the case for Aboriginal peoples across Canada (Kirmayer et al. 2007). Most suicides are male, consistent with suicide patterns over time and globally. Yet this pattern of youth suicide among Inuit, which is now an epidemic, was largely unknown prior to the 1980s. The suicide rate across all ages in Nunavut from 1999-2003 was 122.5 per 100,000, ten times the rate for Canada (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics 2003). In one community sample in Nunavut, one in five Inuit were found to be depressed (Haggarty et al., 2002), and another study of Inuit over the age of 14 in a Nunavut community found that 43.6% had thought of suicide within the past week and 30% had made a suicide attempt within the last six months (Haggarty, Cernovsky Bedard, & Merskey, 2008). A public health problem in the extreme, suicide among Inuit is in urgent need of attention.

**Figure 1. Suicide deaths in Nunavut, 1975-2007.**

Data from the Office of the Chief Coroner, Nunavut and Northwest Territories

## Suicide in Nunavut, 1975-2007



Suicide is central to this thesis by way of three questions. These questions were derived from a previous study called *Unikkaartuit* (people telling stories, or the storytellers) I directed in two Inuit communities in Nunavut, Igloolik and Qikiqtarjuaq, where we gathered from Inuit their meanings of not just suicide but of sadness, happiness/well-being, healing, health, and change at the community and personal levels (Kral 2003). Inuit in this earlier study spoke of the family as the centre of both well-being and of sadness. Well-being was primarily related to talking, visiting, and close family

ties, while sadness came mostly from being away from family members and losing family members to death, including suicide. A great deal of change was talked about regarding the family, particularly the new and problematic intergenerational segregation in a collectivist, family-based culture, one that has historically been very strongly integrated and organized through cross-generational patterns of relationship.

The origin of this change was attributed time and again by Inuit I spoke with to when the settlements were formed by the Canadian government, when children were made to go to school, initially away from their parents, when the extended family could no longer live together in the new, tiny “matchbox” houses, when “urbanization” began to replace hunting as a major economic way of life. Inuit experience from the narratives focused on changes in their interpersonal and family relationships, changes in the traditional means and modes of relationship. When speaking with Inuit about their views of whether changes in relatedness may be at the core of social problems like suicide today, I found a great many middle-aged and elderly Inuit agreeing and encouraging me to look into this. “It is about time we started asking this question,” said Marie-Lucie Uvilluq, a prominent Inuit counselor working in Social Services in Igloolik.

The first research question thus focuses on colonialism and relatedness: How have relationships changed or remained the same, especially pertaining to kinship, following the establishment of settlements in the Arctic?

In the *Unikkaartuit* project we found that the primary trigger attributed to most suicides in Nunavut, from community members from youth to elders and by Inuit who had been suicidal, was a problem in or breakup of a romantic relationship. In reviewing medical examiner’s reports for suicides in the two communities between 1980-1998 (data

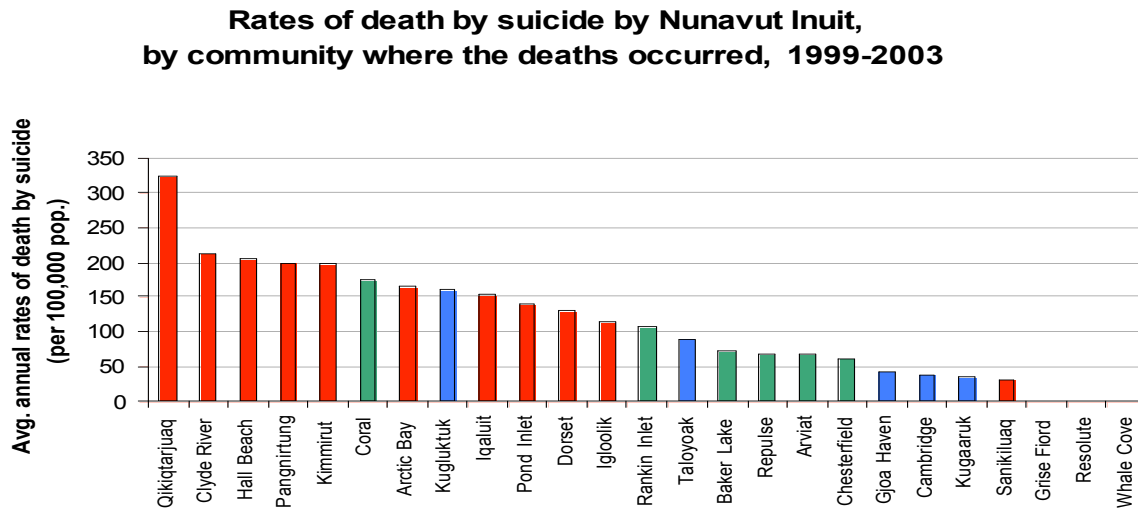
became more reliable in 1980 and is unusable before then), 68% of suicides were preceded by such a romantic relationship event. It was not uncommon for young Inuit couples to threaten each other with suicide when they were angry with each other. Another 20% of the suicides were preceded by the young Inuk having been arrested, often for break-and-entry in someone's house, and waiting for the traveling court to come to the community in a few months. Something very serious is going with romantic relationships among youth. The second research question in this study is thus about youth romance: What are these romantic relationships like, how are they experienced, are particular cultural models associated with them, how are they so directly connected with suicide, and how has sexuality changed in recent colonial times? Arranged marriage enforced a stability in these relationships, and its near disappearance has left youth without guidance in affinal relations. The lives of male youth are examined in particular.

During the planning of the *Unikkaartuit* study, we were originally going to compare Qikiqtarjuaq, the community with highest suicide rate in the then Northwest Territories (337.4 per 100,000), with Igloodik that was then manifesting a very low rate, the second lowest in what was then the Northwest Territories (11.9 per 100,000, slightly lower than the national rate that was 12.3; there had been one suicide in the previous ten years). The high suicide rates found for indigenous peoples in Canada and elsewhere mask the fact that there are numerous communities with very low, some with zero, suicide rates. Figure 2 shows the wide range of suicides across Nunavut communities. It was of interest to the Inuit and non-Inuit participating in that study to learn from communities who are doing well. Between the time that study was first discussed in 1994, and the time of fieldwork in 1998, it became apparent that *change* needed to

become a central analytic category in any research on social problems in the North. By the time of the fieldwork in 1998 Qikiqtarjuaq, having the very high suicide rate, had had no suicides for some 4-5 years, while Igloolik went from having had one suicide in the decade prior to 1994 to having eight youth and one elder kill themselves between 1994-1998. I learned from Inuit living outside Qikiqtarjuaq that something had been done from within that community, by Inuit, to stop the suicides. “We should find out what they did,” an Inuk on our *Unikkaartuit* Steering Committee said to me in Iqaluit. So when I was in Qikiqtarjuaq conducting fieldwork in 1998, I asked Inuit community leaders about what had taken place before the suicides stopped. Two forms of action had taken place. One was to have Inuit meet frequently, sometimes weekly, in the gym in the basement of the Hamlet Council building, the only place where such a large gathering could take place (their modern *qaggiq*, or large iglu that was used traditionally for larger gatherings). One of the people in the Hamlet Council I spoke with, the Deputy-Mayor, had co-organized these meetings to have Inuit talk about suicide, and to talk about what they could do. I learned that one of the outcomes emerging from these discussions was for Inuit to talk to each other about what might be bothering them, or to speak with someone who you think might be upset. The Youth Committee in this community also organized similar meetings of just the youth, on the same topic, with the same outcomes. The youth also became more active in reaching out to others, for example bringing ice to elders from the surrounding icebergs frozen off the shore. A second community action toward suicide prevention took place from the Housing Committee, all Inuit, who decided to remove the number one method of suicide from every house: the closet rod.



**Figure 2. Suicide Rates Across Nunavut Communities.**



Source: Jack Hicks.

Most suicides in Nunavut take place in the bedroom closet, where the youth hangs him or herself from the closet rod, usually at night, on the left side of the closet facing the wall. The removal of closet rods is what I call the Nunavut method of “gun control.” Suicide method is culturally scripted everywhere as is most human behaviour. Gun control has had an effect of decreasing suicide where shooting oneself is the primary method for suicidal death (Carrington and Moyer 1994, Lester & Murrell 1982). This effect has been found for the restriction of any suicide method that is a culturally popular choice (Clarke & Lester 1989). Individuals do not tend to change the method when the script for it is broken, suggesting that mimesis plays a significant role in suicide (Kral 1994, 1998). Guns are in every household in Nunavut and used for hunting; the gun is the Arctic “shopping cart.” Yet few suicides in Nunavut are completed using a firearm. Following the 1998 fieldwork, the Youth Committee in Igloolik, now beset by frequent

suicides, organized themselves with the help of Isuma film company to open a youth centre. For a little more than a year, for as long as the centre was open, there were no suicides. Suicides resumed after the centre was closed. Action by Inuit youth in their own communities, along with other community action, resulted in suicides stopping for some time. No outside remedial efforts (e.g., government bringing selected community members to one setting for intense suicide prevention training) have had such an effect; indeed, suicides have continued to rise in spite of such efforts. When one examines other indigenous, community-driven efforts toward suicide prevention or health more generally, one finds that it matters less what a community does than that the *what* comes from and is controlled by the community as a form of collective ownership and responsibility (Kral & Idlout, 2009). This finding from the two Inuit communities called for the third research question in this thesis: What is the process of youth action toward wellness and suicide prevention in a given Inuit community?

Analytic categories to be considered in some detail in this thesis are change, relationships, and agency. Social change is a frequent topic of conversation among Inuit, and is found within experience across most dimensions. Recent historic analysis will show specific forms of social change that have had profound effects on Inuit relationships and well-being. I will argue that relationship change and changes in kinship or *ilagiit*, related to a loss of personal and collective agency, may be at the core of suicide and social problems in Nunavut. Agency, particularly the interrelated ideas of collective agency, collective efficacy, and social capital, is behind recent efficacious suicide prevention and youth or community well-being investigated here. The loss of such collective agency is examined in the colonial context. Inuit kinship and social

organizational change due to external human forces will be seen to have had its most significant effect in only the last forty to fifty years.

### **Colonial Change and Suicide**

Inuit are a kinship-based people, and although much kin variation exists the bilateral, nuclear family with strong extended family ties has been one very common form of kinship structure (Bodenhorn 2000; Briggs 1995; Damas 1971; Graburn 1969; Nuttall 2000; Stevenson 1997). Kinship tied to subsistence hunting has been the basis of Inuit social organization (Boas 1964 [1888]); Briggs 1970; Damas 1968a; Wenzel 1991). Inuit life has been tied to the land and to animals, with subsistence hunting being part of a complex whole that has included kinship and social relations, ecology, economy, and cosmology (Wenzel 1991).

The earliest contact with *Qallunaat*, or non-Inuit people, began with fighting and capture by English in the sixteenth century, first by Sebastian Cabot in 1501 or 1502 and then by Martin Frobisher between 1576-78. Although there were some trade relations with *Qallunaat*, the eighteenth century also saw fighting between Inuit and French off the southern Labrador coast (Taylor 1984), with Inuit taken as slaves (Trudel 1994). Scottish and American whalers began to have some effect on Inuit lives in the nineteenth century as many Inuit moved near their ships and worked in exchange for food and some European material goods (Damas 2002). This adaptation to Europeans and Americans continued with trading fox furs with the Hudson's Bay Company beginning in the early twentieth century. The RCMP began to arrive in the 1920s, and were after 1940 responsible for distributing family allowances and old-age benefits plus conducting censuses (Malaurie 2007). Christian missionaries began conversion of Inuit in Greenland

in the eighteenth century, however they were not in Nunavut until the 1920s and 1930s. Conversion was relatively swift in the context of epidemic diseases that took many lives; some estimate that most Inuit were killed by disease by the early twentieth century (Crowe 1991). The shaman was forced to cease practicing and largely replaced by the missionary. After 1941, Canadian and US soldiers established meteorological and radar stations throughout the Arctic into the Cold War, and the government era began (Wenzel 1991). Social change after 1953 was massive following the creation of the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, which took responsibility for Inuit lives. The Canadian government created settlements in the 1950s and 1960s. Influences on dispersal of Inuit at that time were primarily the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian government. Health, education, and welfare became major government concerns about the Inuit in the 1950s, and the federal government began major settlement development and organization in the 1960s. Municipal governments were established, and were run by *Qallunaat* for many years (Brody 1991 [1975]). Missionary, residential, and Federal Day schools were established that initially forbade children to speak their Inuktitut language in a government-based assimilation program (King 1999). The new wage economy began to show some growth with the seal industry of the 1970s, but its collapse in the early 1980s following the European boycott and anti-sealing campaigns turned *Nunavummuit* (Inuit of Nunavut) into poor welfare recipients. The last half of the twentieth century has seen the most rapid social change in Inuit history.

Traditional kinship and subsistence-based social organization and infrastructure was severely disrupted during the 1950s and 1960s through the creation of aggregated settlements of numerous kin groups, establishment of mission and residential schools,

and the creation of hierarchical hamlet council political organization where members are voted in (Brody 1991 [1975]). This took place during the severe tuberculosis epidemic that precipitated numerous evacuations and the splitting up of families when members were sent south to hospitals across Canada for long periods of time; many died in the south and were buried there (Grygier 1994). Malaurie (2007) finds that endemic disease among Inuit was a consequence of their sedentarization, showing that an RCMP report from 1956 found the only Inuit in good health to be the ones still living in outpost camps. Inuit dispersal, relocation, and settlement, at times involuntary, has been detailed by Damas (2002).

The mixing of families in large numbers into settlements disrupted the traditional kinship-based social system. This change saw the creation of autonomous child because of the very large number of children being raised together, and adolescent peer groups, formerly unknown in a culture where children and youth had learned from and worked closely with their parents and elders. The new adolescent peer group within the new large settlements significantly unsettled traditional marriage practices and kin relations (Condon 1988). Between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s, age cohorts of Inuit became segregated for the first time, Inuit youth were marginalized, and the modern concept and reality of crime was created (Damas 2002: 199). Maxwell (1994) found that when children were away for a time, as they were in the residential schools for the academic year, they were often not reintegrated into their families upon their return. Rather, they were frequently treated more poorly like orphans. At these schools, children were often called by their Eskimo serial tag numbers, designed after military “dog tags” to be worn around the neck, rather than by their names (which had been modified to Christian or

French names by Anglican and Catholic missionaries, respectively, in the previous generation), up to the institutionalization of “Project Surname” in 1969 (Alia 1994, 2007; Crowe 1997). Such state-mandated legal identities were hoped to supplant a system of identity the Canadian government had little understanding of or interest in, using serial numbers for “maximum synoptic legibility” by the state (Scott, Tehranian, & Mathias 2002: 17). This is in a culture where the namesake, which persists, has been a central feature of Inuit kinship and identity. Relocation also disrupted important “geographic” (Rasing 1999) or “ecocentric” (Dorais & Searles 2001) Inuit identities. Inuit have long identified themselves collectively by the name of a place followed by the suffix *-miut*, meaning being from there. Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, and Hallett (2003) have found that some sense of the persistence of identity over time, on both personal and collective levels that are fundamentally intertwined, is tied to psychological well-being. It is at these subjective levels that structural change at the family level following the creation of government settlements has its most negative effect, in the displacement of cultural and personal identity, roles, and responsibilities (Bammer 1994). The Inuit colonial settlement scheme by the Canadian government turned out to be as much about transforming social relations among Inuit as it was about identifying and “helping” these new Canadian citizens. New social networks were created through the settlements, which served to reconstitute the relationship between the individual and the collective.

Inuit political organization began in the early 1970s, however, and before the decade was out a land claim was proposed by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada organization. Very soon a political territorial agenda was put on the table in Ottawa by Inuit. As is true of other social movements, this one came about through political organization rather than

social disorganization (McAdam 2003). Devolution of health services to the territorial government began in the 1980s, with increasing albeit superficial community involvement in this beginning in the 1990s. A land claims agreement was signed in 1993, and Nunavut was made a territory in 1999. Use of local Inuktitut place-naming practices continued alongside the English names that had been assigned to communities and geographic areas, and these are currently being re-instated. The Inuit naming practice after deceased persons, usually relatives, has continued. Inuit culture has not been taken away. Inuit youth still maintain similar views of their life course as do elders, further indicating a continuity of many cultural ideologies (Collings 2000). One of the biggest challenges to the still new Nunavut public government is the maintenance of Inuit traditional knowledge and its integration with all policies and programs, including health and social services, education, and corrections (Oosten & Laugrand 2002; Wilman 2002). Nunavut is a model and example of indigenism, the world advocacy for human rights concerning “first peoples,” which has been on the move over the last two decades (Niezen 2003). It is the reclamation of identity and autonomy/control among indigenous peoples sometimes referred to as decolonization.

In spite of Inuit gaining significant political control over their lives and land, social problems have remained severe. In his recent comprehensive survey of Arctic human history, McGee (2004: 271) writes that today “peoples of the north are coping with a complex of problems that would stun most southern communities.” Indigenous youth now manifest very high suicide rates across the circumpolar Arctic from Siberia (Vitebsky, 2006), Alaska (Wexler, Hill, Bertone-Johnson, & Fenaughty, 2008), Canada (Kirmayer, Fletcher, & Boothroyd, 1998), and Greenland (Bjerregard & Lyne, 2006;

Leineweber, Bjerregaard, Baerveldt, & Voestermans, 2001). Poverty, alcohol, drugs, domestic violence, and suicide have become prevalent in Nunavut (Bjerregaard & Young 1998). Poverty continues to be a root problem tied to these social difficulties. Reports from Health Canada (1987, 1995), a Royal Commission publication (1995), and other research (e.g., Kirmayer, 1994) indicate that in spite of wide variability across communities, Canadian Aboriginal people have a suicide rate that far exceeds the average Canadian rate. Suicide among Inuit and First Nations in Canada is almost exclusive to adolescents and youth between the ages of 15-24, causing one to pay attention to psychoanalyst Aaron Esman's (1990) view that adolescent experience and behaviour is a barometer of culture.

While the Western Arctic (NWT and Yukon) has more than one and a half times the population of Nunavut, most of the suicides across the Canadian Arctic occur in Nunavut. Between 1988 and 1997, 72% of all of the former NWT suicides took place in Nunavut. While suicides have been decreasing in the western Canadian Arctic and are now close to the national rate, they continue to rise in Nunavut. The suicide rate for the years 1993-97 in Nunavut was 88 per 100,000, compared with 15 for the Western Arctic and 13 for Canada (data from the Office of the Deputy Chief Coroner, GNWT, 1998; figures rounded off). For 1999-2003, this rate in Nunavut rose to 122.5 (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics 2003). According to the World Health Organization, the mean suicide rate for 100 countries supplying this data in 1999 was 16.45 per 100,000, with a standard deviation (SD) of 16.01 (WHO 1999). This places Nunavut over six SDs above the mean, in glaring perspective. Suicide accounts for 40% of all deaths since the creation of Nunavut in 1999 (Government of Nunavut 2007). A recent study of Inuit above the age



of 14 in a community in Nunavut found 43.6% to have thought of suicide within the past week and 30% to have made a suicide attempt in the last six months (Haggarty, Cernovsky, Bedard, & Merskey 2008). Suicide here has become a symbol of social disruption, a contagious behaviour needing to be understood, and a major public health problem requiring remedial attention.

Suicide has become a problem among Inuit concurrent with rapid culture change and “modernization.” This is also the case for Aboriginal peoples around the world, including indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, and Brazil, Canada and the U.S. (see Tatz 2001). Suicides began to increase markedly among Alaskan Inuit in the 1970s (Forbes & Van der Hyde 1988; Parkin 1974), and in Nunavut since the early 1980s (Nunavut Bureau of Statistics 2003). In Greenland, Inuit suicide has also been concurrent with change to a Western lifestyle during this time period (Bjerregaard 2001; Bjerregaard & Curtis 2003). This change is complex, and I do not mean to essentialize the West as one linear force of influence (see Herzfeld 2001). Issues of identity, anomie, and powerlessness in the changing social context of Aboriginals lives are recurring themes in discussions of why this dire situation exists (Kirmayer, 1994; Kral, 1998; Minore, Boone, Katt, & Kinch, 1991; O'Neil, 1986; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1995; Sinclair, 1998; York, 1989). In their review of Canadian Inuit suicide, Kirmayer, Fletcher, and Boothroyd (1998: 207) point to the need “to address directly the social problems of economic development, the transmission of cultural tradition and identity, and political empowerment.”

Studies have found a very high prevalence of suicide attempts among Inuit youth, from 34% in a general population sample in Nunavik, Quebec (Kirmayer et al. 1996) to

66% among those presenting to a mental health clinic in Northwest Alaska (Aoun & Gregory 1998). The most common immediate precipitant to attempted and completed suicide among Inuit is interpersonal loss (Gregory 1994; Isaacs et al. 1998). Kirmayer (1994) found prolonged grief to be a risk factor for suicide among Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Other risk factors for Inuit youth suicide have been reported as alcohol abuse, having a history of physical/sexual abuse, a history of solvent abuse, having a friend who has attempted or completed suicide, alcohol or drug abuse among parents, and depression (Haggarty et al. 2000; Kirmayer et al. 1996; Kirmayer, Fletcher, & Boothroyd, 1998), similar to risk factors for First Nations and White youth (Bechtold 1994; Gartrell, Jarvis, & Derksen 1993; Gould, Shaffer & Greenberg 2003). While the experience of psychological perturbation is essential to suicide across cultures, it is clear that social disorganization and cultural disruption is a significant factor in Aboriginal suicide.

Alcohol/substance abuse has been found by several researchers to be the most prevalent risk factor for suicidal behavior among Inuit (Aoun & Gregory 1998; Green, Sack, & Pambrum 1981; Grove & Lynge 1979; Kahn 1986; Kettl & Bixler 1993). A recent study of Inuit suicide in Greenland, however, found a combination of romantic relationship breakup and acute alcohol intoxication to be immediate precipitating factors, but the authors attributed the high suicide rate more generally to rapid social and cultural change (Leineweber & Arensman, 2003). I have indicated that in the *Unikkaartuit* study, romantic relationship problems were the most common immediate precipitant to youth suicide between 1980-1998 in Nunavut (Kral 2003). Alcohol was not reported to be an associated factor. Bechtold (1994: 76) referred to the primary risk factor for suicide among Native North Americans as a “cultural mismatch between the youth and the

environment.” A review of Native American youth suicide by Berlin (1987) identified the loss of traditional lifestyle as being a community-based risk factor, and similar findings have been reported for Aboriginal cultures throughout North America and Australia (Kahn, 1982; May, 1987). Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait (2000) have called this the “legacy of colonization.”

Violence against oneself and one’s partner has escalated to a major public health problem in Nunavut (Burkhardt 2004; Griffiths, Wood, Zellerer, & Saville 1995). Most of the male inmates at the Baffin Correctional Centre, for example, are there because of violence against a woman (Burkhardt 2004). Franz Fanon (1963) pointed out how the reaction of an oppressed people becomes violent in a particular way. Aggression is first turned toward the self, then against one’s family and friends, and then against one’s community. Fanon believed that this violence will eventually turn toward the oppressors and their institutions (see Sinclair 1998). David Maybury-Lewis (1997: 1) quotes Charles Darwin as having written, “Wherever the European has trod, death seems to pursue the aboriginal.” Suicide and violence thus become symbols of, and gates into, the effects of this internal colonialism on Inuit well-being.

In this thesis the Inuit community of Igloolik, Nunavut, becomes a case study for the three research questions. Igloolik has a reputation in Nunavut for being one of the more traditional communities, one respectful of maintaining strong cultural ties. Yet it has not escaped the coming of suicide into the lives of its youth. Life was not like this before, and young Inuit were not known to kill themselves.

### **Igloolik and Iglulingmiut: A History**

Igloolik, an ancient name sometimes spelled Igulik and meaning “place of snow houses,” is an island located on the north end of Foxe Basin, and in now the name of an Inuit community located above the Arctic Circle at 69° latitude. There is continuous daylight in the summer and no sun from about November 26 to January 16; during the dark period there is often 5-6 hours of striking sunset-sunrise without the sun ever coming up over the horizon. The coldest temperatures in Igloolik are during January and February, with the mean temperature then at -36° centigrade. The settlement of Igloolik was incorporated in 1976. It is considered one of the more culturally traditional Inuit communities, and Damas indicated that already by the late 1950s it was gaining “major status” in the Canadian Arctic (Damas 1963: 30). Inuit living in the community of Igloolik refer to themselves as Iglulingmiut<sup>2</sup>, however the kinship network of Inuit from this region includes three groups: Iglulingmiut, Tununermiut (now Pond Inlet) and Aivilingmiut (now Repulse Bay, Coral Harbour, and Chesterfield Inlet). In 1922, Mathiasen counted 146 Iglulingmiut, 165 Aivilingmiut, and 193 Tununermiut. Iglulingmiut populations over recorded time are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Igloolik Island and Settlement Populations at Various Time Points

Year	Number	Camps	Source
1822	155	4 or more	Parry (1969 [1824])
1867	23 igloos	at 1 camp	Hall via Nourse (1879)
1900	60	?	Matthiasen (1976 [1928])

<sup>2</sup> The suffix –miut means “people from.” Iglulingmiut in English means “people from the place of snow houses.”

1904-05	60	?	Grant (2002)
1912	40	?	Grant(2002)
1922	146	5	Matthiasen (1976 [1928])
1949	284	11	Damas (1963)
1959	514	3 or more	Damas (2002)
1961	100	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1963	580	3 or more	Damas (2002)
1964	118	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1965	229	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1966	297	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1967	357	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1967	680	island	encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com
1968	430	settlement	Rasing (1994)
1968	733	island	Damas (2002)
1972	867	?	encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com
1996	1174	settlement	Canada 1996 Census
2001	1286 (approx.)	settlement	Canada 2001 Census
2005	1300 (approx.)	settlement	StatsCan 2006

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Community profile data for the community of Igloolik for 2001 from Statistics Canada shows a population of 1,286, 1,225 or 95% were Inuit. The population count is not recorded locally, but in 2004-2005, the year when this fieldwork took place, there were about 1300 people living there. In 2001, 130 adults (80 men, 50 women; only 10%

of the population) had full-time, full-year jobs, earning an average income of \$35,672. The median personal income for all persons over age 15 was \$12,459, and median household income was \$33,280. The median family income with a couple in the house was \$27,072, and that of lone-parent families was \$17,856. The unemployment rate is indicated as 30.6%, with the employment rate being 37%. Fifty-three percent of Inuit are identified as participating in some way in the labour force, and most of this work is for the government of Nunavut or the Hamlet Council. Other data from Statistics Canada have slightly less than half of Inuit over the age of 15 earning income in the same year and there is no explanation for the discrepancy. A large number of Inuit are carvers, and sell their carvings to *Qallunaat* or to the Co-op store which then sells them for twice the price paid to the carver. Most carvers are men, and many women make traditional fur clothing and often sell this as well. Most of the non-Inuit or *Qallunaat* in Igloolik work in the elementary or high school, the Arctic College, managing the two stores, or for the Government of Nunavut (GN). There is a large, two-story Government of Nunavut building that was built recently, painted blue and called “the blue building” in the community. In it are housed the central office of the GN Departments of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, and the Environment. The proportion of people between ages 20-34 with less than a high school certificate is 49.3%. In 2004-05 there were 200 students registered in the high school, yet in 2001 only 110 were listed as attending. The high school principal during my fieldwork was unable to estimate how many of the 200 enrolled students were actually attending school. Government transfers made up 30.2% of income for Igloolikmiut, however I was unable to find the exact number of people on welfare.

In 2001 there were 110 married families, with an average of four people per family. Lone-parent families numbered 70, with 71% of these headed by a female. There were 25 one-person households out of a total of 255 dwellings and, as in many Nunavut communities, there is a housing shortage in Igloolik. Sixty-five of these houses were privately owned, and the rest were rented. Rental costs ranged for about the same-size house from as low as \$45 per month for a family on welfare to over \$4,000 for a family where in this case the male was employed and one of the more prosperous Iglulingmiut. The community is about evenly divided along religious lines, with 51% being Catholic and 45% being Anglican (Protestant). A further 3% listed “other” for religion, which from what I have seen is primarily membership in a Pentacostal, born-again church. Six percent listed “no religion.” Forty-five percent of the Inuit population, almost half, is under the age of 15.

The landscape surrounding the community, which is located on the shore of a large bay on the south side of the island, is relatively flat and accessible by snowmobile, dog-team, and in the summer by all-terrain vehicles or year-round, for those with time and energy, by foot on the island. The ice begins to break up in June and goes out by the end of July. In August, the warmest month, the average temperature is +8° centigrade. The highest temperature on record is 25°, and it rarely goes above 15°. The snow disappears for about six weeks in August and September. The water is usually open until the middle of October. A few kilometers to the north is a hilly range called Arvadjja, where remains of ancient Dorset/*Tunnit* campsites can be seen. Many Inuit still hunt for “country food,” which includes primarily seal, walrus, caribou, and char or other fish, but also polar bear (a “tagged” animal with limited access), whale, and birds like ptarmigan

and goose. Inuit told me with some consensus that there were between 5-7 dog teams in Igloolik, with only two of these teams considered “active” for regular hunting. There are two licensed outfitters in Igloolik, for walrus and caribou. Some Inuit reported to me that there are still two permanent outpost camps, while others said that the last year-round camp closed a few years ago.

People are often seen walking around the community. They are either visiting each other or going to one of the two stores, the Northern (formerly the Hudson’s Bay Post, although not the original one) and the Co-op. Each store sells the same items, from food to clothing to guns, although I found the Northern to be more expensive for many items. Food is 3-5 times more expensive than in the south. The community has historically been divided down the middle of the community into Anglican and Catholic, with the Co-op on the Catholic side and the Northern on the Anglican side. There is more mixing of where people of each denomination live today, and the history of Christian conversion in Igloolik will be described below and in chapter four. Not many people are seen in the mornings except for children walking, or running in the winter if it is especially cold, to school in the early morning. Walking through the community on a Saturday afternoon brings one into contact with many Inuit. Walking along a street, and none are paved but for most of the year they are covered in packed snow, almost every Inuk I pass looks at me and smiles, usually saying hello, and often stopping to exchange at least a few words. There are no strangers in Igloolik. Even children will come up to me, and the ones I know will tell me what they are doing, or where they have just been, or where they are going, or ask me where I am going. A few children I do not know will sometimes ask me for money, but I never give them any. Children of good Inuit friends



would often stop at my bunkhouse, and I would invite them in, make them hot chocolate, and give them paper and crayons. They would tell me about the pictures they draw, and I learned much Inuktitut from these encounters. A few of them enjoyed teaching me new words each time they would visit. Back outside, the only Inuit who would usually not look at me were teenage males, who were often whizzing by on their snowmobiles. Younger women were less likely to say hello or speak with me than were men, especially if they were walking with another man. This was very apparent in the other community I was conducting fieldwork in during winter-spring of 1998, Qikiqtarjuaq, where most younger women would not even look at me on the street. In that community, when walking with a man, younger women would often move to the other side so that the man was on my side when we would pass each other. This pattern of behaviour will be explored in chapter five.

Elderly Inuit would be friendly with me, especially the older women. Most of them did not speak English, but would smile and usually help me with my very broken Inuktitut. Most Inuit middle-aged or older were very interested in speaking with me, and were interested in my project. Some had remembered that I had been there a few years earlier. When I indicated my partnership with Embrace Life Council and its Director Lori Idlout, many Inuit would open up in part because Lori and her family are from Igloolik.

### **Retrospect: Pre-Contact Igloolik**

Historically, two groups of humans have lived in the Arctic. The first group, who lived there from about 4,500 up to 800-1000 years ago, are known as *Tuniit* by Inuit and among archaeologists variously as Paleo-Eskimo, Independence, Denbeigh,

Pre-Dorset, Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt), or Saqqaq (southern Greenland), and those south of the high Arctic, Dorset starting some 2,500 years ago. They comprised two separate occupations, although continuous in some regions, divided in time some 3,000 years ago. The earliest people arrived in Nunavut during the warming phase of the late Atlantic period about 4,000 years ago, their tiny stone tools being the same as Siberian peoples of the same time (McGhee 2004). The Pre-Dorset and Dorset peoples were the same, the latter group being differentiated archaeologically by the significant development of art, e.g., tiny sculptures, and the hunting of marine animals (Hoffecker 2005, McGhee 2004). McGhee (1996) suggests, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that the extremely small tools of the *Tuniit* would fit people who were only a foot tall, fitting with Inuit oral history of a small people and perhaps in keeping with the recent controversial discovery of the remains of a small ancient people who were three feet tall (Brown, Sutikna, Morwood, Soejono, Jatmiko, Saptomo, & Awe Due 2004, Morwood et al. 2005). The *Tuniit* were distinct from Inuit in their being primarily muskox and caribou hunters rather than relying on coastal mammals and seafood, in their tiny tools and animal/human carvings, their having had few if any dogsleds or boats, their structurally different housing, for example having a central passageway and hearth and very short sleeping platforms, and in some areas their housing being more permanent year-round.

The island of Igloolik has evidence of *Tunnit* going back 4,500 years. The *Tuniit* at Igloolik hunted caribou and sea mammals, and their small tools resemble those of people of that time in Siberia and the coast of eastern Asia. Material culture shows evidence of a shared animism and shamanism. Very few bones of the *Tuniit* have ever been found. Inuit oral history has the *Tuniitt* as a strong, timid, and peaceful people who

spoke *kutak* or “baby-talk,” and Inuit also have stories of a little people called *Inugarulligaarjuk*, as a number of Inuit told me (see Evic 2004; McGhee 1981, 1996, 2004; Vaughan 1994). Some Inuit oral history has the *Tunnit* as being large people, and other as their having been short people. Inuit stories explaining their relatively short beds found in the remaining campsites typically depict these people as having slept with their legs raised.

Inuit, the more recent group, are known among archaeologists as Thule when they were on the coasts of the Chukchi Sea between Siberia and Alaska 1,000 years ago. They moved east through Baffin Island, Quebec, and Labrador and, quite suddenly, the *Tuniit* disappeared; their departure remains an archaeological puzzle. Typical accounts in Inuit oral history have them attacked and chased away by Inuit. The Thule-Inuit arrived from the west with unique materials and practices, including whale-hunting, dogsleds, the *umiaq* or large skin boat, and intercommunity warfare that likely caused the disappearance of the *Tuniit*. Although the same people, the primary differentiation between Thule and Inuit is that the former lived in permanent winter communities in houses with thick insulation, hunted bow-head whales in the summer, and also lived in the High Arctic. The Inuit, by the eighteenth century, had moved further south and became more seasonally nomadic (McGhee 2004).

An excellent dissertation by Wilm Rasing (1994) on Igloodik provides a thorough account of the history of Iglulingmiut from the writings of European and North American *Qallunaat* explorers, and Damas (2002) has written a comprehensive study of the process of aggregated settlement of Inuit secondary to economic and policy concerns of *Qallunaat*. Much of the remainder of this chapter is based on these works, and original

sources including primarily Parry (1841, 1969 [1824]) but also Hall (1970 [1876]), Rasmussen (1929), and Boas (1964 [1888]).

The first European to reach and write about Igloolik was Captain William Edward Parry, who in early 1822 anchored at Igloolik Island until the following August. Oral history of the visit of Parry and his men exists, and Igloolik elder Rosie Iqallijuq, who I interviewed when she was age 94, spoke with Leah Otak and historian Dorothy Harley Eber about these stories. The stories include Inuit receiving gifts including a gun, and liking the tea and sugar supplied to them (Eber 2008). Like others of their time and beginning in the sixteenth century, Parry and his fellows were looking for a way to get through North America, finding the by now somewhat infamous Northwest Passage to India and China. Parry's voyages, this being his second to the Arctic, persisted with support from the Crown in England. It had become common belief by the 1790s, following three centuries of trying, that no such passage existed for ships to pass through in the south. After the Napoleonic wars of 1815, then ruling the seas and having the strongest navy, Britain took on the obsession of finding the Passage through the Arctic. We shall see that this was the beginning of one of the last colonial frontiers (Williams 2002).

There is much ethnographic data about Iglulingmiut in Parry's publication of this second voyage, written of course in the context of the time. I will focus on descriptions of Inuit inter-relationships, be they kindred or otherwise, although such descriptions in Parry are far fewer than the many accounts of relationships between Inuit and the ship's crew. According to Rasing (1994: 21), "[a]ge, gender and performing the duties they entailed formed the structuring principles of Iglulingmiut society in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century." In

1822 -23 there were reported to be 155 Inuit staying over the winter on Igloodik Island, and some 300-400 inhabiting northern Foxe Basin (Rasing 1994: 9).

Dwellings in Igloodik in July of 1822 were walrus or seal skin tents, or the *tupik*, varying in size depending on the number of Inuit inhabiting each. The skins were described as a “patchwork” (Parry 1841 [1824], Vol. 2: 22), six to seven feet high, with a tent pole of animal bones tied together. The door was a flap of skin, and when entered one saw on one side a *kulliq* seal oil lamp on stones, above which was hanging the *utkusik* or cooking pot. Cooking utensils were on the side. Skins were laid out as beds across a third of the space in the tent. Tents twice this size were also constructed, which may have been a summer *qaggiq* or gathering place, or perhaps for a larger family. Sod houses or *qarmait* were also observed. In the winter, one description of a snow dwelling has several igloos jointed together with passageways between them, thus having numerous separate rooms. Two winter camps comprised a total of 50-60 Inuit, about a mile or more from their summer camps and the two being some distance from each other.

Parry’s journals describe the seasonal moving between winter and spring-summer-fall described later in some detail by Mauss (1979a [1950]) for Inuit across the Arctic. Mauss described a seasonal morphology or settlement pattern in Inuit life. Larger number of Inuit would gather together in the winter, living in igloos or snow houses. In Alaska he described long houses up to 50 feet long, which Mathiassen (1976 [1928]) described as permanent dwellings in the Western Arctic. Several families, likely one large extended family, would live together in these winter dwellings. There would typically be a number of igloos built within close proximity of each other with no systematic arrangement, although cases were found of single, isolated igloos. Mauss

reported that it was primarily in the context of this more aggregated winter settlement that the shaman or *angakok* would practice his or her healing and other ceremonies, and when larger gatherings would take place in the big igloo or *qaggiq*. Collective events included what Mauss referred to as a solstice festival, where the seal oil lamp or *kuliq* in every dwelling was extinguished and then relit. In Igloolik today this is done at the return of the sun in mid-January, continuing a long tradition there that has now become a major community festival. Food was shared throughout the winter settlement. Mauss also referred to a “feast of the dead” held across the Arctic, where the namesake, of a deceased relative given to a child, was celebrated as a brief “reincarnation” or memory of the dead and gifts were exchanged among the living namesakes (Mauss 1979a [1950]: 59). Mauss (1979a [1950]: 66) found that the winter season was a reunion of kin when members are united as “a domestic unit... [by] strong bonds of affection.” He indicated that winter was the time for the very wide practice of spouse exchange, what he called a sexual ritual that took place among all adults.

The two seasons were represented in a game of tug-of-war, where each team represented either winter or summer. Certain taboos were followed for each of the two seasons, such as summer caribou skin not being allowed to come into contact with a winter walrus skin, and caribou may not be eaten until the walrus-hunting winter clothes were exchanged for summer, usually sealskin, clothing. Summer work on caribou skins ended with the first walrus catch. The two seasons formed for Mauss two jural and moral systems, each with its own rules and rituals.

On Igloolik Island, Parry observed in 1822 that in the fall the smaller family hunting units of Inuit would move from various points and gather on the southeast corner

of the island, known today as Igloolik Point. There they lived in *qarmat* or sod houses until mid-December, when they would build aggregated igloo camps of about 30-60 Inuit at each one. Some Inuit lived in the *qarmat* while others lived in the *iglu* or snow house (545). Walrus were hunted at the floe edge on loose ice, while seals were often hunted at their breathing holes. Damas (1963) reported that in Igloolik the winter camps lasted about four months during the early contact period at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to six months in the 1930s, to 9-10 months by 1961. Staying longer in one place was clearly related to increasing reliance on *Qallunaat* trade goods and then government dependence, and Graburn (1969) also reported that the government-induced settlements began with longer winter residency in designated locations.

Toward end of April, Inuit would begin to disperse along the coast into smaller family camps again, seals were hunted while they basked on the ice using a different hunting method of sneaking up imitatively to the seal. By late June and early July Inuit family camps were at their highest point of dispersion, living in skin tents or *qarmait*/sod houses. Parry found that in early July many Inuit had left the island, either hunting caribou inland to the north on Baffin Island or fishing along rivers and lakes, or hunting walrus, whale, or seal by the shore (Rasing 1994). He noted that the nuclear family was now living in the *qarmat*, however Inuit in Igloolik told me that just before and during the government settlement period of the 1960s, those living in a *qarmat* typically had extended family within that dwelling.

Parry and his crew found the Inuit to have a sense of humour, which they did not always appreciate, for example when Inuit chased his men around with dripping seal flesh that disgusted them, or when women jokingly offered to barter their children for

European material goods (Parry 1841 [1824]). Much gift-giving took place, particularly Parry and his men giving gifts to Inuit. Parry was surprised that Inuit often did not thank them, but always expressed thanks (*qujanna*) when *giving* a gift to a White man. When Inuit men came to trade at the ships, they often had a young boy or two with them, in keeping with the apprenticeship modeling used for the teaching of children. When Parry and his men would visit an Inuit tent, there would usually be more Inuit there, including children, than those who lived in that tent; Inuit from neighbouring tents would very often be visiting. “The persons living under one roof, who are generally closely related, maintain a degree of harmony among themselves which is scarcely ever disturbed” (Parry 1969 [1824]: 533). Different families appeared to get along well with each other, and anger as interpreted by Parry and his crew was rarely displayed. Games and sports were frequent everywhere Parry and his crew visited, and throat-singing among the women was common. *Amna aya* songs, today known as *ajaajaa* songs, were also common.

Although parents had authority over children, and men over women, with shamans being shown reverence, Parry observed no hierarchical social arrangements concerning power. Inuit initially found it difficult to understand the “idea of superiority of rank possessed by some individuals among us,” attesting to the absence of this form of hierarchy among them (Parry 1841 [1824], Vol. 2: 76). Disagreements were infrequent among Inuit, and Parry found them to be a very peaceful people. Parry noted their general altruism toward each other, writing that compared to his own people in England they “do more service to society and more honour to human nature” (535). The importance of interpersonal relations, especially among kin, was noted to be of extreme importance. As one of Parry’s team members wrote, “To be deprived of near relations is to be deprived



of every thing” (544). When Parry invited an Inuk he had befriended to return to England with him, the man refused, saying that it would cause his father to cry.

Individual autonomy was respected, as noted by Parry when summer camp dispersal took place without any disagreement regarding who went where with whom. It has been noted that this autonomy in the context of collectivism has been a traditional value among Inuit (Brody 1987). Parry described honesty and kindness as great virtues among Inuit. One Inuk expressed to Parry, “‘*Shagloo ooagoot nao*’ (we do not tell a falsehood), an expression of peculiar force among them.” (Parry, 1969 [1824]: 414).

Inuit men and boys would go hunting, leaving only the eldest men behind, while women and girls stayed in the igloos. In 1867 Parry found one winter camp to have 23 igloos. Many times the men would get only a few hours sleep before leaving very early in the morning to go hunting. In one example of seals being caught and brought to the shore by the men, children ran to greet the men who were dragging the seals. The seal was butchered in one igloo, and women from all the other igloos brought a cooking pot to this igloo and received a share of the meat. On another occasion, after news was brought to the camp of two walruses being caught some distance away, a young woman of about 20, seeing that a dog belonging to one of the men was in the camp but was needed to help with hauling the meat, ran with the dog “with a hardihood not to be surpassed by any of the men” and returned two hours later with walrus meat (Parry 1841: 290). At other times, when there were not enough dogs, women would help pull the sled. On longer hunting trips accompanied by women, the women would also be hunters.

Parry described games women would play while the men were hunting, including throat singing, producing a “much more guttural and unnatural sound” where two or more

women would be standing “face to face, and with great quickness and regularity respond to each other, keeping such exact time that the sound appears to come from one throat instead of several.” “Younger females,” likely girls, would often be seen learning the skill (539).

Parry (1969 [1824]: 526-527) reported that women received a higher level of respect than he had expected. He outlined the very different roles for women and men. The woman “makes and attends the fire, cooks the victuals, looks after the children, and is sempstress to her whole family; while her husband is labouring abroad for their subsistence... there are few, if any people, in this state of society among whom the women are so well off.” Men were observed to have more authority than women, and were seen as the decision-makers regarding spouse exchange. When traveling at one time with an elderly couple, however, Parry observed that the two would always consult with each other “in every case of doubt as to the situation of a place, the best route, or the most advisable method of overcoming any difficulty,” showing that decision-making, at least for this couple, appeared to be a mutual and equal process between the genders.

Parents were very much involved in the marriages of their children, and arranged marriage has long been traditional among Inuit. Parry found that women were often married in their early to mid teen years, and men married in their late teens. Husbands were often considerably older than their wives, and a number of men, about one in ten, had two wives. The “marriage ceremony” consisted of the man going to the tent or hut of the woman’s parents and taking her by force to his own. Parry described the woman always being reluctant, and that other women found this to be humorous. The new couple would establish their own home. A nuclear family usually had three or four children, and

women often helped with each other's children, including suckling another's baby if she was busy. Inuit were very surprised that there were no women aboard the two ships, and quite incredulous that many of the men were single (Parry 1969 [1824]: 211.

Parry (1969 [1824]: 529) wrote about what he called "infidelity" among Inuit, what Rasing (1994) referred to as "classic nineteenth century hypocrisy":

I fear we cannot give a very favourable account of the chastity of the women, nor the delicacy of their husbands in this respect. As for the latter, it was not uncommon for them to offer their wives as freely for sale as a knife or jacket. Some of the young men informed us that when two of them were absent together on a sealing excursion, they often exchanged wives for a time, as a matter of friendly convenience... The behaviour of most of the women, when their husbands were absent from the huts, plainly evinced their indifference toward them, and their utter disregard of connubial fidelity. The departure of the men was usually the signal for throwing aside restraint, which was invariably resumed on their return. For this event they take care to be prepared by the report of the children, one of whom is usually posted on the outside for the purpose of giving due notice."

George Lyon, a co-leader of the expedition, noted, contradicting Parry, that spousal exchange for one or two days was arranged by both men and women, and commented from his 1822 English perspective on the liberal sexuality of Inuit women in general. According to Loomis (1971), an Inuit elder told Charles Francis Hall in the 1860s that she had had sex with both Lyon and Parry, suggesting that these men took advantage of this situation. Parry wrote that "the authority of the husband seems to be sufficiently

absolute” (1969 [1824]: 528), however noted that this was not true of all couples.

Contradictions regarding male authority are found in Parry’s account.

It is also worth noting in some detail Parry’s (1969 [1824]: 529-530) observations of child-parent relations, a topic we will return to as Inuit today describe childrearing as having changed significantly over the last two or three generations.

The affection of parents for their children was frequently displayed... Nothing indeed can well exceed the kindness with which they treat their children... the gentleness and docility of the children are such as to occasion their parents little trouble, and to render severity towards them quite unnecessary. From their earliest infancy, they possess that quiet disposition, gentleness of demeanour, and uncommon evenness of temper, for which in more mature age they are for the most part distinguished. Disobedience is scarcely ever known, a word or even a look from a parent is enough; and I never saw a single instance of that forwardness and disposition to mischief, which, with our youth [in England], so often requires the whole attention of a parent to watch over and correct. They never cry from trifling accidents, and sometimes not even from severe hurts, at which an English child would sob for an hour.

Parents were described as indulging their children and not punishing them, treating them “by a thousand playful endearments” (529). Affection for children was noted as being very high. During times following a period of little food due to poor hunting, when food finally arrived the children were fed first. Parry described parents’ efforts at making toys for their children. Boys eight years and older would be taken hunting by their fathers and

were given responsibilities such as bringing home the dogs and sled over several miles, and by age 11 were actively using the harpoon and bringing food to their family. Young girls would help their mothers prepare and sew caribou and seal skins for clothing, initially “preparing the materials for their mothers” (1969 [1824]: 537). Children were named after relatives, likely ones recently deceased as is the Inuit custom.

Adoption was a very frequent activity, and Parry )1969 [1824] reported that it took place primarily with boys, usually in infancy, for reasons of later subsistence, “who alone can contribute materially to the support of an aged and infirm parent” (531). Parry suggested that other reasons for adoption included the mother’s milk being deficient and the death of the natural parent. Adoption agreements witnessed by Parry were made primarily between men.

Indigenous cultures typically demonstrate a high level of respect of their elderly people. Parry reported quite the opposite among Iglulingmiut, claiming that toward elders “they betray a degree of insensibility bordering on inhumanity” (Parry 1969 [1824]: 532). He only cited the case on one old man, however, who was ill and not attended to as Parry would have liked, including having him walk a long journey when others were riding along in the sled. It is possible that in this case his treatment may have had to do with his illness, as ill and dying Inuit elders sometimes sought or asked for death as a form of altruism to be less of a burden on their family. Parry gave no other examples, so his generalization based on one case is suspect.

Quite a number of Inuit fell ill and died while Parry and his crew were among them, and Parry attributed this to the Inuit being in their presence. It was noted that Inuit appeared to be in excellent health prior to this. Men and women were strong and the men

muscular, and Inuit were able to endure long journeys on foot often traveling with speed. Parry noted the whiteness of their teeth, and their hair was a shiny black. Parry also introduced Inuit to alcohol, offering them wine but Inuit did not like it.

It is interesting that some Inuit oral history in Igloolik about Parry's visit is negative. A shovel was stolen from his crew, and Parry reported having "the delinquent.. receive a dozen lashes on the back with a cat-o'-nine tails" and that Inuit were more cautious around him and his men after that (Parry 1969 [1824]: 412). In Eber's (2008: 30) oral history project, she found that Inuit elders have a story about the shaman's curse after this incident on the *Qallunaat*. The man whipped for stealing the shovel was a shaman, and Inuit have stories that he was tortured. One Inuk's story had it thus: "These white people took an Inuk prisoner whose name was Eqilaglu. This little man was also a shaman and the reason he became a prisoner was because he didn't want his wife to be abused by these white people. He was probably trying to protect his wife. These authorities took him and tied him upside down to a mast... They had a big axe and tried to kill him, but since he was such a powerful shaman the axe would go right through him and just cut the wooden pole. No marks on him!" Forty-three years later in 1866, Charles Francis Hall spoke with an Inuit elder named Erktua from Igloolik about this incident, who reported that this Inuk was an *angakoq* or shaman but named Ooootook, and described the shaman as becoming a legend among her people. This elder also said that she had been Parry's lover, although Hall began to doubt her honesty being very pious himself. (Loomis 1971). This shaman cursed Parry's men and their ship, and many Inuit believe that this curse is the reason no *Qallunaat* visited Igloolik until 1913 while they were at other camps such as Pond Inlet. In 1913, a French-Canadian explorer named

Alfred Tremblay came to Igloolik looking for gold, and noted that Inuit feared him and his men. Tremblay had lifted the curse, according to the elders' elder Rosie Iqallijuq, who I interviewed in 1998, and the next *Qallunaat* ship came to Igloolik in 1931. (Eber 2008).

Charles Francis Hall was in Igloolik between March-April 1866 and September-March 1866-67 during his search for the Franklin expedition (Loomis 1971, Nourse 1879), so perhaps he lifted the shaman's curse. Once source reports that he was in Igloolik for one month (Robeson 1876). He found Inuit to be "a kind, generous people... there can be no people exceeding them in this virtue—kindness of heart" (Hall 1970 [1876]: 520). Hall remarked at their sharing meat with everyone even during scarcity, and discussed marriage betrothal where "love—if it comes at all—comes after marriage." Parents were described as being very affectionate with their children, and child "disobedience... is rare" (521). Hall observed "no political organization among them" but saw that there were leaders, elder Inuit who have no authority over others yet who are listened to and respected. He found Inuit to be very peaceful with each other. The *angakok* or shaman played an important role in both healing the sick and helping the community with hunting, the weather, or the ice. When Hall arrived in Igloolik, two *angaquit* or shamen conducted a "performance of two hours" to relieve his face from frostbite, and Hall believed that they helped him (Nourse 1879: 302) in spite of his reservations about these healers; he pitied them that they were not Christian and in his sense of *Qallunaat* superiority referred to them as his children (Loomis 1971: 101).

Hall found that Inuit knowledge of animals and geography was extensive. Certain ritualistic behaviours were followed in hunting, such as not working on caribou skin while walrus hunting or the hunter staying home for a day after a walrus was caught.

Cutting meat was orderly, as in some cases was the eating of meat. Meetings were sometimes held in the *qaggiq* or big igloo, which included the angakok praying for group prosperity followed by a feast where Inuit think of the goddess of water animals Sedna. A return of the sun ceremony was described in January, where the flame of the oil lamp or *kudlik* would be extinguished in every igloo and relit. When asked about the meaning of this, one Inuk told Hall, “New sun, new light” (529). Hall indicated that he learned from the extensive geographic knowledge of Inuit at Igloolik, who he described as intelligent (Robeson 1876). Robeson (1876: 193) noted that, “During his residence among the Equimaux he adopted their manners and customs, conforming entirely to their mode of living.” MacDonald (1994: 309) cites Hall recollecting, “I am feasted from morn to night by the Igloolik Innuits [and] I do not believe there is a kinder or more honest people living... in the wide world than these Igloolik natives.” Hall described Inuit as his friends.

Franz Boas (1964 [1888]) was in Nunavut in 1883-1884, and while his plans to visit Foxe Basin and Igloolik did not materialize, he described much detail about Inuit while he was in Cumberland Sound and traveling up the east coast of Baffin Island. He discussed family relations. Men hunted, built houses, fed dogs, and make hunting tools, while women stayed in and around the home making and mending clothing, preparing food, keeping the oil lamps, visiting each other and bringing their work with them, playing games, and tending to children. Women would stop working when a seal was brought to the entrance of the dwelling, and not continue until the man has cut it up. The men would eat first, in the winter typically boiled walrus or seal meat, and then the women would eat followed by the women and men eating frozen meat together. Men would visit each other in the evening talking, singing, gambling, and telling stories while



the host placed a large chunk of meat and knife on the side which everyone was free to enjoy.

Boas observed parenting and affinal relations, which paralleled the earlier reports from Parry. “The parents are very fond of their children and treat them kindly. They are never beaten and rarely scolded, and in turn they are very dutiful, obeying the wishes of their parents and taking care of them in their old age” (Boas 1964 [1888]: 158). Adoption was very common. By age 12 children began to accompany their same-sexed parent with chores, the girls preparing skins and sewing with their mothers while the boys hunted with their fathers. Children’s marriages were for the most part arranged when they were very young, and married once each partner was competent in the work of her or his sex. The young couples Boas observed usually moved in with the wife’s family, however Damas (1963) reported that among Iglulingmiut virilocality, or the couple moving to the husband’s camp, was most frequent. Polygamy, while infrequent, was allowed of men although it has also been described among Inuit women. Spouse exchange for a brief period or a season or more was common, and Boas even described some of these exchanges as “commended by religious law.” Boas added about the marital relationship that “[t]he husband is not allowed to maltreat or punish his wife; if he does she may leave him at any time, and the wife’s mother can always command a divorce. Both are allowed to remarry as soon as they like, even the slightest pretext being sufficient for a separation” (171), whereby “ties of consanguinity appear to be much closer than those of affinity” (172). Children would usually remain with their mother following a divorce.

During long winter evenings in the 1880s, storytelling and singing were common. Visitors would arrive from another camp every few days, staying for a few days, and

were “welcomed with great hospitality..., served with the choicest pieces of meat” (166). Boas wrote that “[t]he social order of the Eskimo is entirely founded on the family and on the ties of consanguinity and affinity between the individual families.”

The Fifth Thule Expedition, led by Knud Rasmussen, was in Nunavut between 1921-1923. Mathiassen (1976 [1928]) was in Foxe Basin and with the Iglulingmiut during those years, and described his observations with Inuit of Iglulik Island and their kindred the Tununermiut to the north and Aivilingmiut to the south. In the winter Inuit lived in multiple domed snowhouses with two nuclear families in each dome; Damas (1971) noted that these were extended families. Extended family groupings were cooperative units. Food distribution among extended families was according to both duty and voluntariness, and Iglulingmiut “practiced village-wide distribution of game which was directed by a village *isumataq* [“wise person”; “generally one of the older men and usually headed the largest extended family group in the band” (67)] who divided meat among the heads of the extended families of the local group” (Damas 1971: 66). He reported a decrease in the population by 1900 due to disease brought by the whalers, which Inuit there also spoke of. The population had generally increased by the time of his expedition there, however. Mathiassen described material culture among Foxe Basin Inuit, while Rasmussen wrote about what he called Inuit intellectual culture. Mathiassen did, however give some descriptions of relationships among Inuit in terms of hunting. Sharing, an essential component of Inuit culture, included the sharing of dogs for hunting. Rare was the hunter with a complete team, so they regularly lent each other their dogs. On long trips women usually helped untangle the dog sinew ropes, and help steer the *qamutiiq* or sled, and Mathiassen (1976 [1928]: 89) indicated that “women are often just

as good drivers as are the men.” He indicated that he did not notice Inuit being politically organized, and noticed “no superior authority, but custom and habit and tradition provide certain rules which must be observed” (209). An elder male in the camp would be the one who decides to move, to hunt, and other social activities, again referred to as the *isumaitoq* or “one who thinks,” today in Igloolik called *isumatuq*. The husband of the nuclear usually, but not always, was the decision maker for the family. The same gender roles were noted as were by Boas, as were betrothals at birth and marriage norms, frequent adoption, occasional polyandry, spouse exchange arranged by the men, and marriages breaking up frequently with rapid re-marriage. There was, of course, no marital “ceremony” up to the time of the Christian missionary. Mathiassen found no evidence of infanticide having ever been practiced among the Foxe Basin Inuit, even though it had been reported to be taking place further west (Balicki 1970). Child-rearing was also similar to that described by Boas, and “children are allowed their own way” yet were usually well-behaved (214). Mathiassen witnessed some spanking of children who were unusually disobedient. He reported only one case of a mother who beat her children to a degree he thought excessive. Children followed their older siblings and other older Inuit as models in their play until they began to learn various skills. In the evenings, on long and dark winter days, and during blizzards, extended families would spend time together talking, playing games, or men drum-dancing or men and women mask-dancing together in the large snow house or *qaggiq*.

In Rasmussen’s (1929) book on the intellectual culture of Foxe Basin Igloolikmiut, he describes in detail his interactions with the shaman Aua and shamanism in general, the numerous spirits, taboos, drum-dancing and singing, and rituals following

a boy's first seal catch and a girl's first menstruation. He reviewed many common myths and tales, including one of sharing where at one camp a family who did not share their seal meat later ended up starving to death. Rasmussen described the power of the namesake, given to a baby after someone, usually a relative, who recently died. Being half Greenlandic Inuit, Rasmussen spoke Inuktitut and thus was able to understand all he heard. Noting Inuit relationships with and deep respect for animals, Aua the shaman announced that "[t]he greatest peril of life lies is the fact that human food consists entirely of souls" (56).

### **Continued Contact and Change**

Rasing (1994) describes changes that took place among Inuit in response to non-Inuit or *Qallunaat* coming to or around Igloolik. The first period of significant contact was during the whaling period between 1860-1915. No whalers entered northern Foxe Basin, however their material goods, the most important of which were rifles and boats, made their way to Igloolik via Pond Inlet to the north. A whaling station was established in Pond Inlet in 1903, which was taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1921 and became a fur trading post (Mathiassen 1976 [1928]). Rifles initially supplemented rather than replaced the hunting tools of bow and arrow and harpoon. Although the *umiak*, a skin boat that held over twenty people, was already being used by Inuit, the wooden whaleboat was introduced to Inuit by the whalers and it eventually replaced the *qajaq* (kayak) for hunting in the area of Foxe Basin.

The RCMP came to the Tununermiut in Pond Inlet in 1923, and from there made trips south to Igloolik beginning in 1924 with two officers and two Inuit guides. An

influenza epidemic began that year, not surprisingly, among Inuit that was still active in 1926 (Grant 2002). In 1928, an RCMP patrol began from Pond to Igloolik. The RCMP made 24 patrol trips to the Foxe Basin between 1922-1955. The RCMP were in the Arctic to keep the law, and were in Pond Inlet in 1924 to investigate a murder of Newfoundland fur trader Robert Janes by Inuit (the killing was recommended by a respected elder; see Grant 2002), as symbols of Canada's sovereignty during a time when the Arctic was also desired by both the U.S. and Greenland, and to issue relief rations to Inuit in part secondary to the disease epidemics. Relief was further supported by family allowances begun in 1948 for Inuit. An RCMP detachment was established in Igloolik in 1964 (Rasing 1994).

Inuit from Igloolik would travel to Pond Inlet after the 1921 opening of the Hudson's Bay trading post for materials such as guns, ammunition, flour, tobacco, and cooking utensils in exchange for fox fur. Fox fur prices were high, so a demand and supply were established. Trapping fox had not been a common activity for Inuit, and they incorporated this with their usual subsistence hunting. Rasing (1994) indicated that trapping took much time away from hunting for Iglulingmiut, which in turn affected the food supply for families and began a status differentiation related to material goods. He reported that "trapping created new social ties and new forms of cooperation that accentuated distinctions between families" (87). Fox trapping was primarily a winter activity, and winter camp times were extended. Rasing reported that cooperation among Inuit also began to decrease with the possession of whaling boats received from whalers. A Hudson Bay trading post was set up in Igloolik in 1939. It closed in 1941 after a decline of fur prices, and re-opened in 1947. I have not found documentation of life

during those six years, but it is likely that the closing of this post had a negative effect on Inuit given the trading relations that had been established with *Qallunaat*.

The first Christian mission established in Igloolik was Catholic in 1931, the priest coming south from the Tununermiut at Pond Inlet. Wachowich et al. (2001: 40) writes that before any missionary arrived among the Iglulingmiut, Christian bibles written in syllabics were already among them by the 1890s. Bibles arrived in Pond Inlet in 1919 written in syllabics from Reverend Peck in southern Baffin, and an Inuk lay minister named Uming began prophesizing (Laugrand 2002). While lay Christian prophets began the process of conversion in many camps before missionaries were ever seen, growing literacy in syllabics with the Bible and hymns being the only translated material, Christian ideas were being diffused by many who wanted to teach syllabics. Laugrand (2002:201) cited an Arctic Christian preacher named Low, who in 1906 wrote, “Every native who learns to read, and who possesses a book [bible], becomes the teacher of the uninstructed; in this manner education is spreading rapidly.” Wachowich, Agalakti Awa, Kaukjak Katsak, and Pikujak Katsak (2001: 41) write that Uming, or Umik as they have the name, began “a religious movement which incorporated Anglican hymns with the waving of white flags, fervent hand-shaking and preaching.” The handshake greeting appears to have been first established as a sign of Christianity (Mathhiassen 1976 [1928]). Elder Rachel Uyarasuk indicated that “After we became religious, we started shaking hands with people who had newly arrived to welcome them” (Oosten & Laurgrand 1999: 136).

Serious competition for souls had developed in Pond Inlet between the two Catholic and two Anglican missionaries in the 1920s, and the Anglicans were initially

more successful. In Igloolik, Catholicism was initially successful in Christian conversion, however the Anglican mission was set up in 1959, the same year that Igloolik was determined to be an official settlement by Ottawa (Laugrand 2002). Church and state were working together at the time. In their conversion of Inuit, the missionaries on both sides made efforts to do away with shamanism, polygamy, spouse exchange, and many traditional customs including the old *ajaajaa* songs and women's facial tattoos (Maurie 2007). Elder Rachel Uyarasuk said that "We were told that we were to turn our back on our old life and start a new life. We were told to let go of anything that was old." Her father told her "we were not to be singing those songs anymore, for they belonged to the people who had no religion. We were told not to believe in our dreams anymore, for people used their dreams to know what was going on" (Oosten & Laugrand 1999: 141). Shamanism had been a primary moral ordering mechanism, with polygamy and spouse exchange serving toward kinship extension and social solidarity. The missionary was replacing the shaman as healer, as he did not fall ill to the epidemic disease that was spreading. Furthermore, some Inuit saw a positive feature in the doing away with many taboos, exchanging them for a few others such as not hunting on Sundays. Taboos were commonly broken, and Rasing (1994) believed that their sheer number made it almost impossible not to break many of them. A common one among men, but also among some women, was having sex with animals. In speaking with elders today, it is not uncommon for them to spontaneously mention this particular taboo and it having been broken frequently. Confessing a broken taboo was the common discourse with a shaman when someone fell ill, and not confessing a taboo could result in that person's death and/or misfortune, or harm or death to family members. Rasing cites Saladin D'Anglure (1986)

as noting that during the 1920s and 1930s, about 15% of the men and 3% of the women among the Iglulingmiut were shamans.

In the Igloodik settlement, the first nursing station was opened in 1960 and the Cooperative, a general store, in 1963. One major reason Inuit moved to the settlement, however, was the day school for children. Damas (1971: 77) indicates that in 1960-61 the extended family was still the central “residential and economic unit and... point of reference for emotional ties and diffusion of authority.” The first day school was opened in Igloodik in 1959. School was now mandated for Inuit by the Canadian government, and thus the settlement began to draw in families from the camps because they wanted to be with their children, especially after houses started to be built in Igloodik in 1964 by the federal government. A Catholic residential school began in Chesterfield Inlet in 1955, run by nuns and priests. Many Iglulingmiut children were sent there. Some Iglulingmiut reported to me that they moved to the settlement to be closer to their children, while others said they did this because of the warmer housing, and some because they said they were threatened with no family allowance if their children did not attend school or if the parents did not move to the settlement. Rasing (1994) found that most Inuit in Igloodik indicated that they moved to the settlement because of housing availability. He reported that one-room welfare rental houses, known as “matchbox houses,” were shipped to Igloodik during the 1960s, and that these houses were a major attraction to the settlement. The Catholic and Anglican churches, together with the Hudson’s Bay post, had already been drawing more Inuit to the island. While the population of the settlement of Igloodik was growing during the 1960s, some Inuit families or just hunters would move to the land in the spring or summer to set up hunting camps. Initially, the settlement was in part a



winter “camp.” Hunting began to decrease as a major activity, and Rasing (1994) notes a rapid decrease in hunting licenses issued to Inuit in Igloolik between 1965, when most families were completely dependent on hunting and trapping, and 1968 when only seven families were so dependent. There appeared to be a consensus among middle-aged and older Inuit I spoke with in Igloolik that a majority of Inuit had arrived at the settlement from the land camps by 1969. Southern food was increasingly available in the settlement, and with less reliance on skin clothing there was less demand for hunting. A polar bear quota started in 1968, allowing 23 bears to be hunted that year by Inuit in Igloolik. In 2004 this quota was five bears. Hunting quotas also exist for walrus (since 1983), narwhal, and the bowhead whale (Rasing 1994). The focus of hunting changed with settlement life, and Rasing called this shift as moving from hunting for survival to hunting for identity. As shall be explored in later chapters, the hunt for identity is only partially related to country food on the land.

The primary organizations helping run Igloolik today include the Hamlet Council, whose members including the mayor are elected, the elementary school and high school, an Arctic College campus, Health and Social Services, the Health Centre, an RCMP detachment, the Housing Association, Education Committee, the Hunters Trappers Association, the Amittuq Youth Society, and a few other smaller organizations. A large, two-story Government of Nunavut building that was built around 2002, also called “the Blue Building” (it is blue), employs about 25-35 people in Igloolik. In the Blue Building are housed the Government of Nunavut Department of Culture, Language, Elders, and Youth (CLEY), the Department of the Environment, and Human Resources.

Damas (1963) noted that kinship patterns remained consistent up to the early 1960s since the time of Parry's visit in 1822. Of concern in this thesis is that these patterns have been changing since the late 1960s when settlement life became a reality for Inuit. Graburn (1969) indicated that by 1969 camp life was no longer a way of life for the majority of Inuit in the Canadian Arctic, as almost all had moved into a settlement.

## **Coda**

Suicide is seen here as a symptom of profound social change that has come from the outside. Kinship and relatedness has historically been at the centre of Inuit social organization. Descriptions of pre-contact social relations among Iglulingmiut demonstrates this core feature of culture. The intense disruption of traditional social relatedness through epidemic disease and death, together with and brought by outsiders in the form of missionaries, fur traders, police, and finally a totalizing government intervention that included schooling, the creation of settlements and establishment of an electoral, hierarchical settlement organizational structure, a welfare state and wage economy, and related structures to include Inuit in Canadian citizenship, has left Inuit in a state of social perturbation. Inuit lost the most basic control over their lives. Yet much of their traditional cultural knowledge and practice remains. In this dissertation I explore the nature of relational change among Inuit, and the returning of collective agency, the example in this case being community action organized by youth toward suicide prevention and well-being. I argue that understanding the process of community-based action toward wellness is the key to suicide prevention in Nunavut, and a local example of the larger agenda of reclamation and sovereignty among Inuit.

A key puzzle in this thesis is the question of how social relations have changed in a culture where they formed its central organizing core. How does suicide represent these changes, and how it is that suicide has become deeply embedded in sexual/romantic relationships among youth? Finally, for youth who are organizing themselves and their communities to offset this tragedy, how are family and community relations helping and hindering their efforts? Most importantly, what is the social process of community youth organization toward well-being?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Ethnographic Theory and Method: The Fieldwork**

A chapter on method in an anthropology dissertation has been uncommon until more recently. It is no longer assumed that ethnography is a “mirror of nature,” to borrow Rorty’s (1979) term from philosophy. While natural settings are the place where ethnography is conducted, the representations of the people in these settings have come under dispute. New ethnographic genres are being developed to address this, and merely “being there” for a given period of time is no longer a sufficient sign of validity. My work with Inuit in Nunavut has been collaborative/participatory, and the meaning of collaboration has shifted depending on the particular study, question, or setting. Petit and Viscart de Bocarmé (2008: 17) write that the anthropologist and Inuit are now partners, where anthropologists have become a social actors and Inuit anthropological actors. In this chapter I will elaborate on how my research has taken shape in Nunavut against the background of a changing ethnography and anthropology.

### **Ethnography Mobilized**

Anthropology has been grounded in the life-in-the-field of both its informants and practitioners. According to many senior anthropologists I have spoken with with, the practice of anthropology is learned in the field. Learned in the field, and by reading the best ethnographies before one’s first graduate school fieldwork venture. When asked by one of his grad students about method, Kroeber is said to have “taken the largest, fattest ethnography book off his shelf, and said, ‘Go forth and do likewise’” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 27). It is very likely that this book was Malinowski’s (1984 [1922])

study of the Trobrianders, which for a few generations of anthropologists formed the primary text on how to do ethnography, particularly the first chapter. One read ethnographies, returned from the field with cherished fieldnotes, and spent the better part of a year writing it all up.

A few years ago while I was writing my tutorial essays and dissertation proposal for McGill, I was fortunate to be able to teach anthropology at Yale. I saw that grad students at Yale only had to submit a short dissertation proposal of roughly five pages to their committee. Very different from the long and detailed proposals required at McGill and elsewhere. While the Yale anthro grad students had to present their proposal orally at a faculty meeting and be faced with some challenging questions, I was surprised at the brevity of such an important document. Asking senior faculty there about this, I was told that so much of what one does is shaped by one's experience in the field that putting together a huge plan of action a priori did not make much sense. One was to stay open and very inductive and not worry too much about the what and the how. Having come to anthropology with a degree in psychology, one of the more positivist social sciences, this struck me as odd. I was especially curious about the "how" in ethnography. There was no graduate course on method either at McGill or Yale, and being a graduate student I was nervous about not knowing exactly what I was supposed to be doing once I began my research. As mentioned, graduate training in ethnography has been a combination of reading ethnographies and "a kind of trial-and-error learning by doing (the 'drop the graduate student in the field and see if he swims' sort of teaching)" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006: xiv). To be sure, many anthropologists' dissertations have turned out to be on topics different than what they were originally planning to study, these topics being

discovered based on their experiences *in the field*. So why write a long research proposal with methodological details?

Jean Briggs (1970) set out to study shamanism among the Inuit, but once there found post-missionary Anglican Inuit linking shamans with the devil and decided to focus instead on emotional life. Hers became one of the classic studies in psychological anthropology. But how did she know what to look at, and the way to look at it, record it, and write it up? In her acceptance talk for a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Psychological Anthropology, Briggs indicated that while in the field as a graduate student she wrote her advisor that she was “totally confused” (Briggs 2005). Her advisor, Cora DuBois at Harvard, replied half a year later that this was a sign of being a good anthropologist. More mystery. When Briggs returned from the field with a plan on writing about social control among the Inuit, but still confused, DuBois told her to “write flowingly” and “just tell five anecdotes and string them together, somehow, and that will be your thesis.” These five chapters became *Never in Anger*. Was Briggs just lucky, or smarter than some of us? For me, about to conduct ethnography in an Inuit community, reading Briggs was supposed to, and did, give me some idea of what to do there. But it was not enough.

Fortunately, the teaching of ethnography is on the increase in anthropology graduate programs. I believe this to be the case for two main reasons. First, there has been an overwhelming surge of instruction in qualitative methods. This qualitative turn, part of the more general interpretive turn in the human and social sciences and philosophy (Rabinow & Sullivan 1979, Scott & Keats 2001; Toulmin 1988; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006), has captured many disciplines that have been primarily or

exclusively quantitative in their methodological practices. Anthropology has been central in much of the transformative change in social theory over the last two decades with the obsession on culture, the cross-disciplinary “cultural turn,” which Ritzer and Smart (2001) describe as a shift in theoretical innovation, retrieval/rediscovery, translation, reinterpretation, and changing intellectual priorities and social conditions. Already in 1952 Kroeber and Kluckhohn [1952] (1963: 3) noted the coming of the culture concept “as the foundation stone in the social sciences,” with the idea of culture being “one of the key notions of contemporary American thought.” We are currently in the midst of Alexander’s (1995) epistemological dilemma, trying to separate the knower from the known. Qualitative methods and courses are part of this intellectual movement. I have recently begun teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where I have already taught my first graduate course in ethnography, and in surveying courses in qualitative methods across departments and programs my list came to over 40. Almost all of these are graduate courses. The number of books on ethnography is now very large and growing each year. This swell in teaching qualitative methods has created a large demand for the same among students, and included is a strong focus on ethnographic methods. Attention is now directed to the “how” (and of course the epistemological and ontological “what” and “why”) of ethnographic and qualitative methods. Books specifically on the learning of ethnography abound (e.g., Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland 2001; Dewalt & Dewalt 2002; Clair 2003; Crang & Cook 2007; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995; Quinn 2005) and new journals such as *Ethnography* are appearing.

A second reason for the increase in interest and teaching of ethnography sits within anthropology. Ethnography has been changing over recent years. The heavy dose

of reflexivity and critical thought witnessed in the literature has at the very least reminded ethnographers that they can include their subjectivities in their ethnographies, leave lasting memories in the communities where they have worked, and that their informants can be objective (certainly about ethnographers), agentic, and political. Reflexivity as the questioning of anthropology's objective stance or of its earlier notion of bounded and timeless cultures, and as the inclusion of ethnography and the ethnographer as an anthropological unit of study, an analytic frame that began seriously in the 1980s with the growing intellectual tide and crisis of representation that followed feminism, postmodernism, and post-*Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Harding 1998; Parkin 1982; Okley [1975] 1996). How are other cultures being represented, and by whom? It is what Rorty (1979: 393) referred to as the "widespread loss of faith in mirror-imagery" within a new historical period. Spencer (2001: 450) notes that this period, which continues, is marked within anthropology as a critique of positivism, a populist valorization of the voices of "ordinary people," and a view of culture as complex, fluid, and in need of an understanding of difference and diversity to balance the traditional focus on uniformity. It appears to some like Fischer (2004) that "[t]raditional concepts and ways of doing things no longer work, [and] life is outrunning the pedagogies in which we were trained." This crisis of representation will be returned to in the context of research and Indigenous peoples.

Attention has also been paid to the "what" and "how" informants tell ethnographers, and how various contexts will determine even the truth value of informants' stories. As Metcalf (2002: 1) has argued, "we have to consider the conceptual premises and conversational constraints under which they select what to tell and how to



tell it.” This consideration of communicative context is also being discussed by historians in their reading of archival material, such as McPherson (2008) in his review of a new book on the escape narratives of former African-American slaves. He writes that these former slaves’ stories are more “credible” because they were written for their families rather than for a public and largely White readership, as they are celebratory once freed by the Union army. Whose representation of a cultural group should we trust the most, and under what conditions? Under what circumstances can an ethnography be most credible?

A decade ago Hammersley (1990: 15) wrote that ethnography was experiencing a crisis of fragmentation, there being no unified ethnographic paradigm. He saw this crisis not of methodology per se, but rather of “deep, unresolved questions about the nature of our knowledge of the social world and about the purposes which that knowledge can and should serve.” The fragmentation or diversification of ethnography can be seen as a response to such questions. Hammersley identified five types of ethnographic writing: naturalistic, legitimacy, confessional, narrator-free, and life history. Other ethnographic perspectives have developed, including critical ethnography, Native or autoethnography, multi-sited ethnography, feminist, and as I will describe in some detail, participatory/collaborative ethnography.

Hammersley (1990) saw the naturalistic and legitimacy modes as present in most ethnographies, with the former being predominant. Naturalistic or realist refers to the ethnographer seen as reporting “what is” from an objective stance and being removed from the text. Ethnography as a mirroring of culture. This is, of course, based on the positivist scientific method known well since the Enlightenment. Interpretive description

based on evidence. Hammersley names the legitimacy mode as the presentation of *reasons* why a study is important, why it is being carried out, and he indicates that it usually accompanies the realist or naturalistic mode. Reasons for research will differ, but they are a necessary form of communication rather than an independent “type” of ethnography; it is difficult to imagine legitimization not accompanying any research.

New ethnographies have developed in response to the crisis. There are seven types of investigation, which include a few given by Hammersley, among these newer ethnographies. *Confessional ethnography* began in the 1980s and has the researcher admitting naivety or, in what can also be called reflexive ethnography, writing much about herself or himself. Geertz referred to this as “the diary disease” (cited in Hammersley 1990: 21), and this style refers to one version of a now old joke about the ethnographer telling the informant, “Okay, enough about you, let’s talk about me now.” Reflexivity as self-description is now being toned down following criticism of this style (e.g., Kleinman 1995). Yet the ethnographer as creator of her or his text, to whom many of the stories are told, must be included therein. This is what Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995: 3) refer to as the ethnographer’s “consequential presence,” including oneself as ethnographer as a character in the interactions and relationships. *Narrator-free ethnography* has less interpretive text, asking the reader to interpret the voices of the informants as a fellow ethnographer. Examples include Crapanzano (1980) on an illiterate Moroccan tile-maker, Stoller and Levine (1993) on the making of a porn film, and Kral et al. (2000) on Inuit elders’ thoughts about the suicide epidemic among their youth. Hammersley (1990) referred to this mode as deviant because of its rarity, however it is becoming more visible in writing about Indigenous peoples. *Life histories* are also on

the rise in anthropology, seen in recent works such as Nancy Wachowich's (2001) collaborative ethnography of the lives of three women of different generations in one Inuit family. Plummer (2001) describes life stories as ways of reading cultures, represented in life narratives, and some of the work on cultural identities is drawing on theoretical approaches looking at continuity and discontinuity of self over time (Chandler 2000; McAdams 1993). Van Maanan (1995: 9) describes *critical ethnography* as one that contextualizes culture "within a larger historical, political, economic, social, and symbolic context than is said to be recognized by cultural members." Jim Thomas (1993) refers to this genre as political, empowering, and emancipatory. He equates it with the literature on critical thinking, an approach to argument based on the identification and questioning of assumptions. *Native or autoethnography* has ethnographers studying their own cultures, with both the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider (Jackson 1987; Medicine 2001; Reed-Danahay 1997). Marcus (1998) has made a call for *multi-sited ethnography* in keeping with globalizing, unbounded cultures, whereby the often conflicting realities of especially "developing" cultures should be studied in the context of their multiple sources of influence. Sperber (1985 [1982]: 4) commented over twenty years ago that Malinowski's realist methodological ideal was no longer tenable and may never have been: "A small homogeneous society, nearly closed to external influences, but one which the anthropologist could penetrate in order to become, through patience and humility, its proud interpreter." *Feminist ethnographies* are more centrally concerned with levelling power relations, "bottom-up" representations, situated knowledges, complicity, reflexivity, political contexts, and the ethics of respect and reciprocity (Billson & Mancini 2007; Harding 1998; Olesen 2000; Skeggs 2001).

The seven ethnographies described above each have unique perspectives. It is their conceptual overlap, however, that is most interesting to me. All are in response to identified constrictions of the naturalist/realist approach to social research, and are in line with the currents of change in social theory. The ethnographer is no longer viewed as the naturalistic, objective observer, but as a “positioned subject” (Shehata 2006: 246). Confessional ethnographies try to counter the idea of an objective and unbiased ethnographer who is removed from the text. Serious removal from the text does little justice to the researcher’s otherwise heavy involvement with the people—an involvement that has been central to the ethnography. Objective-subjective boundaries, and the other oppositions described earlier, are represented in ethnographies at one end where the narrator’s presence is downplayed or absent, and at another more blurred end in Native/autoethnography and confessional ethnography. Life histories can also contribute to this blurring, with extensive detail about informants that presents a richer and deeper portrait of culture from the inside. Critical/feminist and multi-sited ethnographies are conceptual and methodological representations of anthropology’s adaptation to a changing social and intellectual world. There is, to be sure, a disadvantage of reifying each of these ethnographies into kinds when a high degree of confluence exists. Nevertheless, they are each developing into genres, giving notice of their presence. I will develop what I see as a partial umbrella term for some of these new ethnographies, a mode that can be called *participatory/collaborative ethnography*. There have been a few examples of this term used in more circumscribed contexts (e.g., Jackson 1989; Turner 1996), however participation is viewed here through a wider lens with implications for additional revisioning of anthropological knowledge.

## Participatory Research and the Observing Participant

“The rejection of the radical separation between the observer and the observed,” writes Michael Herzfeld (2001: 4), has “created more, not less, empirically grounded forms of knowledge.” Participatory research, a linking between the researcher and the researched, has been around for about thirty years and takes on a number of forms. It has emerged from a several directions, including action and community-based research paradigms that have employed concepts such as “empowerment” and make reference to Kurt Lewin’s (1947) action research and Paulo Friere’s 2001 [1970] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Action research emerged in the 1940s following Lewin’s and others’ lingering progressivist attempts to link (social) science with democracy and political action, and research with social practice. Action research found early applications in such domains as industry, organizations, anti-poverty programs, education, and nursing (Hart & Bond 1995). Fals Borda (2001: 28) described his own participation in the founding of participatory action research in the 1970s, when he and like-minded others were determined that the goal of science “should be to obtain knowledge useful for what we judged to be worthy causes... especially by and for the underprivileged classes which were in need of scientific support.”

Participatory action research was born of dissatisfaction and disillusionment of received social science of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Suggestions for change included the addition of community participation to the research method. In the academy this focus was supported by increased attention to critical theory emphasizing social action (Calhoun & Karaganis 2001), including collaboration between researchers and those being researched (Susman and Evered 1978).

Central to the development of participatory research has been the bridge-building between theory and practice relevant to people in communities. Anthropology has contributed to this movement, gaining the prefixes of applied, practice, development, action, and advocacy (see van Willigen 1993), and more recently the term collaborative ethnography (Lassiter 2005). Anthropology has more generally begun to address research from a participatory perspective, where informants are also co-investigators, through public anthropology. Seeing public anthropology as an idea in search of reality, Purcell (2000) identified this perspective as a contribution to the public good through participation and engagement, including public participation in research. He suggested that the discipline “demonstrate that engagement/participation is its own fulfillment” (33). Borofsky (2000) proposed that a public anthropology link theory with application, empower others, and aim at addressing and solving public problems. More recently, he pointed to the growing use of the term and suggested a focus on public accountability and a framing of the frames, including public frames, e.g., local, to better understand problems of the world (Borofsky 2007). An overlap certainly exists between public and applied anthropology (Rylko-Bauer, Singer & Van Willigen 2006), and Lamphere (2004) notes that anthropology more generally is attending to the participation of community members as co-researchers, with collaboration extending beyond professional to between researchers and communities. She cautions against comparing or even inventing types of anthropologies, seeing the discipline as moving toward community collaboration, public outreach, and influencing policy.

Although participatory research has some meaningful overlap with participant observation, there is a fundamental difference. Where the participant observer

participates in the everyday life of the culture/community being studied, the participants in participatory research include informants in the role of co-researchers. Their participation here can include involvement in the planning, conduct, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination/knowledge transfer of research at community and academic levels. According to Whyte (1991: 20), participatory action research (PAR) “thus contrasts sharply with the conventional model of pure research, in which members of organizations and communities are treated as passive subjects, with some of them participating only to the extent of authorizing the project, being its subjects, and receiving the results... In PAR, some of the members of the organization we study are actively engaged in the quest for information and ideas to guide their future actions.” The participation of community members as research collaborators adds an unfamiliar dimension to the given state of academic knowledge production. It opens a door to a new methodology, and to new theory.

I have elsewhere described participatory or collaborative research as an attitude rather than a method (Kidd & Kral 2005). There are perhaps as many forms of participatory research as there are participatory studies. It is most basically a *collaboration* between those in formal positions as researchers and research participants, subjects, or informants. How one conducts the research is wide open. The collaboration/participation can range from consultation to co-researcher to co-principal investigator. When an action component is defined, the meaning of this can also range widely. The term community-based participatory research (CBPR) has also been used, and is gaining widespread attention in public health (Higgins & Metzler 2001; Minkler, Blackwell, Thompson, & Tamir 2003).

There is an increasing emphasis in anthropology on subjectivity and agency, the continuing attempt to “get it right” from the native’s point of view (Beihl, Good & Kleinman 2007). Ortner (2006) places the newer orientation toward subjectivity and agency as a response to the dominant cultural theories of constraint, notably functionalism, structuralism, Marxism, and even interpretive-symbolic anthropology. The current paradigms of thought have human behavior largely determined by social and cultural forces.

Yet social theory is beginning to see what Burke (2005), borrowing from Touraine (1988), calls “the return of the actor” where social networks, relationships, and intentionality are replacing older notions of structure. Getting “the native’s point of view” is now going into its third definition since coined by Malinowski (1984 [1922]) many decades ago. Malinowski conducted naturalistic/realist ethnography, and wrote that the principal goal of ethnography is “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world” (25, original italics). Geertz (1973) took this quote to a second level, a deeper one he called “thicker” by studying subjectivity through “experience-near” language (Heinz Kohut’s term), that which is used frequently and makes sense to those using it, and looking closely at how the social structures of a given group of people both contour and are contoured by these peoples’ experiences.

The third and most recent definition, discussed in the next section, has the natives as actors standing for their own representation. It is the native’s agentic point of view and then some. A political stance regarding research has emerged.



### **Ethnography Indigenized: From the Native's Point of View, Act III**

The notion of participation in anthropology, with the anthropologist as participant, is as old as the discipline. Participant observation has been anthropology's praxis of the in-out game of ethnography. Bernard (1995) is one of many who argue that ethnography is the foundational stone of anthropology. The method of participant observation has been of one foot living in, with, among, and through a few close others in an unfamiliar culture for an extended period of time, and the other foot remaining "home," which explicitly has been Western academia, with observation taking place from some remove, theorizing from another place, and writing about all of it for the people of a Western locale. This academic home has operated within its own host of beliefs, customs, and rituals. We have been aware of these features of participant observation for a long time, and are familiar with the notion that ethnography begins, ends, and starts all over again with the act of translation between worlds. Or at least that is the way it has been.

Whereas ethnographers have typically learned the languages of the cultures they are studying, the people in those cultures have more recently been learning the languages of anthropology. Anthropology, like sociology and history, has according to McDonald (1993:47) been "a study of subject peoples by a member of the conquering state, written for citizens of the conquering power." The ivory tower armchair has not been solely responsible for shaping the new reflexive anthropologist, as much discussion about ethnography has taken place in the field. Critiques of ethnography have come from the academy, certainly, but those working within Indigenous communities know that a strong critique has come *from* the field: from the communities, from the informants.

A growing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars are arguing for a widening of anthropology's methodological circle to include the people in the communities being studied. Many have heard or voiced the complaint "We are being researched to death!" in Indigenous communities, and a few of these communities have reportedly closed their doors to outside researchers (Darou, Hum, & Kurtness 1993; Oakes and Riewe 1996). Sperber (1985 [1982]: 5) quotes a Trobriand Islander, post-Malinowski, as saying "If we are going to depend on anthropological studies to define our history and our culture and our 'future,' then we are lost." I have spoken to a few Samoans (their land is now called American Samoa) who told me that Margaret Mead has little respect among their people. It is not an anti-research attitude *per se*, as there is great interest among many Indigenous communities to document their own traditions and histories (see Couture 2000; Mihesuah 1998). The problem, rather, has been a legacy of one-way, ethnocentric research practices by academic outsiders. Set against what has been referred to as the historical trauma of colonialism experienced by North American Aboriginal peoples (Duran, Duran & Brave Heart 1998), many Indigenous communities have come to interpret as insulting the study of their people by transient Others who then vanish without providing results in a form that is useful to the people studied. Indigenous researchers are now growing in number. Indeed, it has been said that they are researching themselves back to life. An Indigenous and academic call has been made for a change in how ethnography is conducted.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 9) is a good recent exemplar of arguments for methodological advancement. She sets out an agenda for more "respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful" research with Indigenous peoples, suggesting that researchers

ask themselves important questions such as whether their spirits are clear and their hearts are good. Hers is a call for participatory, reflexive research with Indigenous peoples. In the introduction to the edited volume *Natives and Academics*, Devon Mihesuah (1998) notes that the common theme across contributors, all of them Native, is that most of the work written about Indigenous peoples has been one-sided and that Indigenous peoples should participate in, and indeed lead, research on Indigenous peoples. On the subject of the relationship between anthropologists and Natives, Vine Deloria Jr. (1997: 211) recalls his experiences at meetings of the American Anthropological Association, indicating that “anthropology [still] carries with it some incredibly heavy baggage. It is, and continues to be, a deeply colonial academic discipline” with an attitude that “Indians, even Indians who are trained in anthropology, cannot be trusted to be objective, to be analytical, or to understand what is happening in their own communities.” Cecil King (1997: 117), an Odawa (Ojibwe) and an academic from Queen’s University in Ontario, asks, “When will anthropologists become instrumental to our ambitions, our categories of importance?”

Others from within anthropology have similarly been arguing for a change. That anthropologists have represented “the native’s point of view” is being contested by the natives themselves, as argued in Caroline Brettell’s (1993: 9) book entitled *When They Read What We Write*, which examines anthropology’s responses to “when the natives talk back.” One of the movements we are seeing is the *Indigenization of ethnography*, part of what Sahlins (1999) has referred to as the Indigenization of modernity: the project of cultural reclamation by Indigenous peoples through Western-global constructs. It is, as Asad (1991: 323) has written, “that modern modes of representation (e.g., film and video) have helped to reconstitute colonized subjectivities.” A code of research ethics has been

written, for example, by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1993), where community participation in any research is an ethical principal. The same is in the document on ethical research practices by Canada's National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO 2007). This path of Indigenization goes both ways, however, also in the form of Indigenous constructs informing Western thought and practice. Indigenization can thus include a participatory mode of thought, one concerned with sharing. The larger Indigenous reclamation project has also been taking place at high speed in Nunavut, and a few local and participatory research projects can serve as examples.

### **Participatory Research in Nunavut**

There are a number of projects in Nunavut that are in various ways participatory, and two will be presented here by way of example. The first is autoethnographic, an oral history project begun in Igloolik in 1986 by George Qulaut and John MacDonald under the auspices of *Inulariit* Elders Society and the Igloolik Research Center (MacDonald 2001). To date, this on-going project has recorded over 500 interviews with elders, most of whom have now passed away, documenting many aspects of Iglulingmuit (the people of Igloolik) oral history and traditional knowledge. Louis Tapardjuk and Leah Otak, both of Igloolik, have overseen the translation and transcription of most of the interviews, conducted by community members. For research purposes, the entire collection is stored on computer media and can be readily accessed through word-processing search programs. I use some of this data in the present thesis. The collection is widely consulted by community members, researchers, educators, and the media, Inuit and *Qallunaat* (non-

Inuit or White) alike. The community of Igloolik began this continuing series of interviews of Inuit Elders about their own cultural history, and numerous other Inuit communities have begun doing the same. While some *Qallunaat* have been involved in this project, it may be described more accurately as a native ethnography.

The second example is part of a larger Memory and History in Nunavut project, a grant-funded partnership between Nunavut Arctic College, GÉTIC/Université Laval, and *Pairijait Tigummivik*, the Iqaluit Elders' Society. These three partners organized a workshop in Igloolik in 2000 on *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* or *IQ*, roughly translated as traditional Inuit knowledge and life (*Workshop on Inuit Qaujimanatuqangit*, 2001). They have published a document of this workshop that serves as one aspect of understanding *IQ* for anyone involved in *IQ* research, and it includes discussion of topics such as copyright, consent, authorship, involvement of Elders, language, conduct of interviews, remuneration, and community access to results. This document is available in Inuktitut, English, and French.

The two projects described above have a number of commonalities important to participatory research. Both address research questions originally proposed by Inuit, and Inuit and *Qallunaat* are mutually involved in the projects from planning to dissemination. The projects cover the cultural history of Nunavut, a topic relevant to both Inuit and *Qallunaat* scholars, educators, and media. Elders are involved centrally, in keeping with Inuit tradition of high respect for this age group. There is no distinguishing hard line between researcher and participant, yet roles and responsibilities maintain the integrity of the work.

In my collaboration with Inuit, we have gone beyond traditional academic ethical guidelines, which, while important and evolving conceptually, still tend to underemphasize deep participation. Ethical research guidelines have been and continue to be produced by various Indigenous organizations. Our work has been guided by input from community members and organizations in Nunavut, including Inuit Elders. We have also been guided by the Ethical Guidelines for Research by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP 1993: 37, 39). These RCAP guidelines, compiled along with numerous other reports by the Canadian government, are the Commission's standard of "best practice." These guidelines were developed to ensure that "appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledges and values of Aboriginal peoples, and to the standards used by Aboriginal peoples to legitimate knowledge." The guidelines claim that research with Aboriginal populations must conform to new sensibilities concerning respect:

In the past, research concerning Aboriginal peoples has usually been initiated outside the Aboriginal community and carried out by non-Aboriginal personnel. Aboriginal people have had almost no opportunity to correct misinformation or to challenge ethnocentric and racist interpretations. Consequently, the existing body of research, which normally provides a reference point for new research, must be open to reassessment.

In addition to providing recommendations on consent, review procedures, access to results, community benefit, implementation, and addressing Aboriginal knowledge in line with the arguments described earlier by Tuhiwai Smith (1999), the guidelines of the Royal Commission for Aboriginal Peoples describe principles of collaborative research:

In studies located principally in Aboriginal communities, researchers shall establish collaborative procedures to enable community representatives to participate in the planning, execution and evaluation of research results.

In studies that are carried out in the general community and that are likely to affect particular Aboriginal communities, consultation on planning, execution and evaluation of results shall be sought through appropriate Aboriginal bodies.

The convening of advisory groups to provide guidance on the conduct of research shall not pre-empt the procedures laid down in this part but shall supplement them.

Anthropologists have already begun debating the reassessment of work with Indigenous peoples, and some of these debates have been launched by provocative claims of disagreement concerning now classic studies or researchers (e.g., Freeman 1983; Harper [1986] 2000; Heider 1988; Tierney 2000). Questions of representativeness, research effects on communities, and achieving consensus on the appropriateness of consultation are but a few of the frames for dialogue between Aboriginal and academic knowledges.

### ***Unikkaartuit***

This dissertation grew out of a previous study I directed called *Unikkaartuit*, or The Storytellers. *Unikkaartuit* was a project on suicide and wellness among the Inuit in the Nunavut communities of Igloolik and Qikiqtarjuaq (Kral 2003), and the participatory methodology has been described in a paper I co-authored with one of my Inuit collaborators, Lori Idlout (Kral & Idlout 2006). That study began in 1994 through discussions at a national conference on suicide in Iqaluit attended by Inuit and *Qallunaat*, with the largest number of delegates being Inuit. I was asked to chair a panel on research

on suicide in Nunavut by a conference organizer, by someone working on the development of community wellness programs with the Government of the Northwest Territories. I was the only non-Inuk on the panel, and the speakers were Inuit women who worked as community counsellors. These women spoke about their work and about the problem of suicide in their communities, and then we opened it up to audience members' ideas about improving knowledge about suicide toward suicide prevention, about what they needed to know and then how to get that information. Most of those present were Inuit. The presentations and discussions were in Inuktitut with simultaneous translation into English, and quite a few ideas were generated about the *what*, important research questions, and *how* a study on the understanding of Inuit suicide could be done from an Inuit perspective. Many community members offered their ideas, and the process was Inuit-driven. A few of us, Inuit and Qallunaat, decided to pursue a research grant application which was successful (National Health Research and Development Program, Health Canada). I was the principal investigator.

It is important to note that the participatory action design of the project came originally from suggestions by Inuit from a number of communities; I had never heard of participatory action research. I later discovered their ideas were congruent with an evolving academic literature. An Inuk from Iqaluit organized an Inuit steering committee composed of representative Elders, youth, health and wellness workers, etc., and I organized an academic research team in the south across several universities and disciplines. The mutual planning took a few years, as expected, and two Inuit communities participated. Youth committees, Elders societies, education committees, and other groups within each community had input into the study, and the semi-structured



interview was reviewed by elders and the youth committees before any interviews began. My primary collaborators were the youth committees in each community. Two Inuit and two *Qallunaat* fieldworkers interviewed 90 Inuit between the ages of 14-94 in the two communities. The former Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC; now a department of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Inuit organization primarily responsible for the Nunavut land claim) and Lori Idlout, then with NSDC and now Director of Policy for Health and Social Services Nunavut, joined later informally with plans to help with local dissemination and work toward linking the findings to Nunavut government policy and program development (see NSDC 2001).

The *Unikkaartuit* report has been used by the Government of Nunavut by the Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY). Along with a few other reports on Inuit suicide that also came out in 2003 (Inungni Sapujjijit 2003, Stevenson & Ellsworth 2003), *Unikkaartuit* helped provide part of the background for the development of Embrace Life Council in 2006, an Inuit organization in Nunavut focused on community-based suicide prevention and wellness. The *Unikkaartuit* report was also used in the development of Health Canada's National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy begun in 2007. Perhaps most importantly, shortly after we left Igloolik, the local Youth Committee together with Isuma Film Productions, also in Igloolik, opened a youth centre. The suicides that had been so frequent in this community completely stopped for the next 1.5 years while this centre was open. High school attendance increased, and break-and-entry crimes decreased significantly during this time. Such community-based suicide prevention activities in Nunavut have been described by Kral & Idlout (2009) as examples of working collective agency in Indigenous communities. Three new studies

were developed from the *Unikkaartuit* project, including this dissertation. Another study, funded by SSHRC, emerged from the *Unikkaartuit* finding on the central importance of the family in Inuit well-being and healing as a participatory project examining continuity and change in Inuit kinship over time. I am no longer participating in that study and gave the PI position away after one year once I began graduate studies at McGill. A third study has begun on resilience and success stories, defined locally, among Indigenous youth across Siberia, Alaska, Nunavut, Greenland, and northern Norway, funding by the National Science Foundation in the U.S. This project is community-based and participatory/collaborative, with local steering committees and Indigenous community co-researchers. *Unikkaartuit* has thus been involved in a few different directions for research and action in Nunavut and beyond.

### **The Igloolik Fieldwork**

This dissertation has also been participatory, but in a very different way than *Unikkaartuit*. The *Unikkaartuit* study took nine years from the initial planning meetings to the final report, and I certainly did not want my dissertation to take this long. I needed to be in control of the process as much as possible. I thus conducted a more old-fashioned ethnography, returning to Igloolik for nine months of fieldwork during 2004-05. The project has been collaborative, however, in partnership with the Inuit organization Embrace Life Council. My collaboration has thus been with an Inuit agency whose mission is suicide prevention and community wellness. The research questions were developed over a period of a few years, in discussion with Inuit and in my own thinking, of where we have been and need to go next. In 2003 I attended another national

conference on suicide in Iqaluit, and there met with a small group of Inuit elders and youth from Igloolik and Hall Beach, a nearby community, together with my Embrace Life Council partner Lori Idlout, to discuss research questions for this thesis. Lori Idlout is the Executive Director of Embrace Life Council, so together with her I further developed the focus of the project. My proposal was reviewed and approved by their Council members. I met numerous times with members of my dissertation committee to discuss my plans, particularly George Wenzel. One of my tutorial essays, supervised by George, framed one of the research questions.

I lived in Igloolik from October 2004 to June 2005 conducting fieldwork. I stayed in the old bunkhouse I was in before in 1998, also called the cookhouse, which was then owned by the Igloolik Research Centre but is now owned by the Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut. This house had been built in the 1970s for the Research Lab, and had housed researchers in a now closed off section full of bunkbeds. I slept in an old bunkbed that was left in the front of the house, on an old hardened mattress from the 1970s. There was a large kitchen with two old ovens and refrigerators (only one of each worked) that took up half the space of the small house, thus the name cookhouse. The bunkhouse had been empty for some years, so through John MacDonald, Director of the Research Centre, I asked Kuikitarjuk, also known as Maurice, to fire up the furnace. He was an Inuk, age 61, and had been helping in the past with maintenance of the bunkhouse. Kuikitarjuk was very friendly and spoke some English. He remembered me from my previous fieldwork in Igloolik in 1998, and a few days after I arrived I found a frozen char in a bag hanging from the doorknob of the bunkhouse, which he had left to welcome me back. The pipes in the bunkhouse were all frozen and

there was no running water, but the electric heater finally worked. The water people from the Hamlet Council office were slow to resolve the problem, so for the first 3-4 weeks I was chopping and melting ice for water, including water to use for the toilet.

The Igloolik Research Centre had moved in 2003 from the old round research building, built in the 1970s and looking like a flying saucer sitting on top of a long, thick pole, to the new Government of Nunavut building, called the “blue building” because it is blue, with three offices and a few cubicles. John MacDonald and Leah Otak, with whom I had worked in Igloolik in 1998, set me up in a cubicle that was my “office” during my time there. I was very fortunate, as I also had a phone and (somewhat unreliable) internet access in this cubicle. Mitch Taylor, a biologist with the Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut, was the one who set me up in the bunkhouse now owned by that department. He said that he would work out the rent for the bunkhouse at the end of my stay, indicating that he wanted to support graduate student research this way. I was somewhat uncomfortable not knowing how much the rent would cost me at the end of the year, but had a sense that I would get a deal. In the end it turned out that, to my surprise and delight, I never had to pay any rent at all.

I arrived in October and reunited with old Inuit friends and made new ones. My friend Zach Kunuk, the filmmaker (*Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*), met me at the tiny airport in Igloolik along with Judah Akearok, who worked for the Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut, and who had the key to the padlock on the bunkhouse. We arrived at the bunkhouse, which was surrounded by very high, hardened drifts of snow, and it was clear that nobody had been there for quite some time. It was of course cold inside, and the heat did not work. A

window was broken and Judah noted that the phone had been stolen. There was some furniture inside, but the bunkhouse was otherwise empty. Zach suggested that I take the top bunk off the sole bunkbed left in the front part of the small house to make it more comfortable, and then turned to me in alarm saying, “You have no TV here!” I replied that I never watch TV, and he gave me a puzzled look. I thought that this is not something one says to a filmmaker.

I soon encountered other old friends. Leappi Akoomalik and Edward Tapardjuk had been heavily involved in the *Unikkaartuit* project, and their house was very close to the bunkhouse. Leappi had been a co-interviewer and had spent a month with me after our first month in Igloolik, with her six-month old baby mostly in the hood of her *amautik* (women’s parka), in the community of Qikiqtarjuaq while we were interviewing there. She had also done some translation. Edward had been the president of the Youth Committee with whom I had worked very closely, and was one of the Inuit youth who, after we left, reorganized the Youth Committee and established the Youth Centre in the name of suicide prevention and youth wellness in the community. They had both traveled with me to Iqaluit to meet with the Inuit Steering Committee about the *Unikkaartuit* study. I asked about their families, and Leappi told me that her two younger brothers had killed themselves since my last visit to Igloolik. I spent a lot of time with Edward and Leappi during my stay in 2004-05, either in the bunkhouse or at their house. Walk-in-the-door visiting is a common tradition in Nunavut; one does not knock on doors. During my first stay in Igloolik, I went to one house and, being used to my own tradition, knocked on the door. When the Inuk resident opened it, he told me that I should not knock on

anyone's door in the community as this would scare them; he added that the only people who knock on doors are the RCMP.

My reception in Igloolik this time was quite different from my first fieldwork visit in 1998. I was staying during the first 1998 visit in the same bunkhouse, being run by the Igloolik Research Centre. The phone was working then, as was the heat and water.

During my first week the phone rang and when I answered it I heard a raspy, muffled male voice in English with a thick Inuktitut accent saying "*Qallunaat*, go home. I am going to kill you." The person hung up, but called back several times over the next few days with the same brief message about planning to kill me and quick hang-up. This was my first time in Igloolik, second time in Nunavut, and needless to say I felt quite threatened. I had gotten to know several Inuit in the community, mostly members of the Youth Committee, via multiple phone calls over the previous six months, so I told a few of them about the calls. The older Inuit I spoke to about this merely laughed and told me to ignore it and not to worry. So did the youth. A few days later, after about the fourth threatening call, I answered the phone and tried to engage the speaker in some conversation. "You do not like *Qallunaat* like me coming here," I said. I tried the empathic approach. He did not hang up right away this time. I offered to meet with him. Long pause. I told him that my work here was in partnership with the Youth Committee and an Inuit Steering Committee in Iqaluit, and I named some Inuit I was working with including the elder on the Steering Committee. I told him we were working on suicide prevention and youth wellness. Another much longer pause, and then he hung up. I never heard from him again, and did not encounter any more death threats.

The outsider anthropologist establishing rapport in an Indigenous community can be a challenge. In earlier times, when the natives were not familiar with anthropologists, things may have been easier. Perhaps. Today in Native North America, things are different. Identifying oneself as an anthropologist or a student or researcher in Indigenous communities can be met with suspicion and distrust, sometimes anger, and in my case even death threats. I have visited many Native communities in North America and have often heard this sentiment, and I heard it in Aboriginal communities I visited in Australia's Northern Territory in 2004. I was more than aware of the box I was in before I arrived in Igloolik. During my 1998 fieldwork, soon after I had arrived in Qikiqtarjuaq from Igloolik, I met some Inuit men who had just returned from hunting with fresh seal, and wanted to take their photograph. I had merely taken out my camera and was about to ask permission to take their picture, and one of them rushed toward me waving his hands, telling me to stop. He was angry and asked, "Are you with Greenpeace?" I explained that I was not, and the others now circled me and were listening. He asked again, and I repeated that I had absolutely nothing to do with Greenpeace. He said good, adding that they had destroyed the Inuit seal industry. I later learned that Greenpeace had indeed been part of a European boycott in the early 1980s of Inuit sealskin, along with Brigitte Bardot, which devastated Inuit communities as they had just been starting a new wage economy (see Wenzel 1991). Greenpeace is despised by many Inuit. In that situation with the hunters I was now safe. The Inuk then told me to take as many photos as I want, and even posed for some with a smile.

During my dissertation fieldwork in Igloolik in 2004-05, most of my encounters with Inuit were very positive, as they had been the last time. I had Inuit visitors, mostly

the same friends but very often new ones, almost every evening at the bunkhouse. Visiting is an important and enjoyable part of community life. Sometimes they came with their children, and often the small children of my friends Edward and Leappi would come by on their own to use the crayons and paper I supplied them. The children enjoyed teaching me new words in Inuktitut. I traveled on the land with Inuit, went hunting for seal with them, ate Arctic char (*iqaluq*) at least three times a week, my friend Natar Ungalaq showed me how to cut snow blocks for an igloo, and I even learned a few card games with the men. One elder Inuk woman, Zipporah Inuksuk, surprised me by sewing a pair of beautiful and very warm baby seal mitts after learning that my current mitts were too cold for me on the land; her gift melted my heart. Her fur clothing is on display at the American Indian Museum in Washington, DC. Lori Idlout's mother, Carmen, taught me to make terrific bannock. I rarely socialized with any White people in Igloolik, and there were very few there (5% of the population). There is very little socialization between Inuit and *Qallunaat*. The relatively few times there was a *Qallunaat* at my bunkhouse, when an Inuk would arrive for a visit he would usually leave very quickly. I was on the back of one Inuit friend's snowmobile in the east side of the community visiting another Inuk, when he pointed to several rows of new houses at the very far end of the community. "That's where most of the *Qallunaat* live," he said. "We call that the ghost town, because they never come out of their houses. We never see them."

On occasions I encountered negative attitudes toward me and/or my work, highlighting my role as student/researcher/anthropologist. One Inuit woman I interviewed, who held a prominent position in the community, on two occasions spoke in an angry tone about how my work is an imposition by southern *Qallunaat* on Inuit who



have no say in the work and no interest in it. I explained the participatory nature of my research, and each time it took quite a while before she calmed down and appeared satisfied. But she repeated this performance not very long after I had explained the project to her, as though I had never said anything. Another incident demonstrated this particular negative attitude. An old Inuit friend with whom I had worked closely on the Youth Committee in 1998, and was spending much time with during this fieldwork, was over at the bunkhouse one evening and became angry, saying “You *Qallunaat* researchers never give anything back. Where’s the [*Unikkaartuit*] report? We never saw anything. You researchers are just using us again.” I was shocked, as I had sent him a draft of the research report for his comments, and then a final copy. I had also sent a large number of copies to the Hamlet Council, and some current members of the Hamlet Council had told me they were glad to have received it. I explained all this to my friend, and asked him if he remembered that I had sent him the report. He began to calm down, and then said that he did remember. Shaking his head, he added that he has many books and things and does not know where everything is in his house. I told him that this new project shows my commitment to the community, and that I have no plans to “leave” even though my main home is in the south. Our friendship continued as well as it had before. Yet we had been talking about this project together for years. This negative attitude toward *Qallunaat* researchers is a common cultural model in Indigenous communities. It is well known. I wrote in my fieldnotes after this incident that sometimes attitude is stronger than memory. When starting to develop a new project recently with a long-standing Inuit research colleague and friend, he initially told me that he did not want any other *Qallunaat* academics on board. We now have a few such people on our project

team who have been working with Inuit for years, and my Inuk colleague/friend was fine after he spoke with them a few times. One Arctic anthropologist informed me while I was in Igloolik that another Inuit community, Arctic Bay, had banned all outside research. *Qallunaat* student anthropology researchers like me must repeatedly demonstrate that we are trustworthy. This formed a background to my communicative context in Igloolik.

These are but two examples, and I heard something negative about *Qallunaat* very frequently, at least weekly, but quite rarely about my research. When I spoke with *Qallunaat* working in Igloolik about their experience of anti-*Qallunaat* attitudes, ones who had been there for less than about five years (almost all of them), they were all quick to tell me that they found much anti-White sentiment in the community. One older *Qallunaat*, who had been working in Aboriginal communities in Canada for 40 years, indicated to me that the worst anti-White racism he has experienced has been in Nunavut. Another *Qallunaat* who has been living and working in Igloolik for many years told me that anti-White racism appears to have become worse after Nunavut became a territory in 1999. She said that this may be especially prevalent in Igloolik, which is a politically-involved community. Another *Qallunaat*, a teacher who had been in Igloolik for four years, similarly thought that anti-White racism had become worse since he arrived. He repeated something he heard from a student in grade four: “The *Qallunaat* are going to take all the jobs and take over Igloolik.” This teacher believed that the increasing racism was due to an increase in class structure among Inuit in Igloolik, between what he terms “the haves and the have-nots.” He indicated that one Inuk he knows has a seven-year old snowmobile in bad shape, while this man’s Inuk neighbour who works for the Government of Nunavut has three new snowmobiles. One Inuk friend indicated to me

that he attributes the social problems among Inuit, including suicide, to the internalization of *Qallunaat* ways among Inuit. I heard frequent complaint from White men about Inuit continuing to use the word *Qallunaat* for White people, which they considered offensive. The term was used when Boas (1964 [1888]) was on southern Baffin Island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which he and before him Parry had translated as “European.” It means “eyebrows and stomach” and appears to translate as “bushy eyebrows and big stomach.” Perhaps this described the Scottish whalers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Given the demeaning effects of government colonialism/imperialism over the last several decades, within which anthropologists and other researchers came and went, whether complicit, neutral, or critical, the anti-White attitude makes sense.

One middle-aged female Inuk said to me, “Because we’re of different cultures, you’ll be asking a lot of nitty gritty things that I don’t feel comfortable with. You should know the answer, yet you do not know the answer.” Another Inuk, an old friend in her early 30s, warned me that many Inuit will not trust me for a number of reasons, including my being *Qallunaat* and being a student. “If you say you’re a student,” my friend told me, “they will think you are rich because you can pay for school.” I told her that school is not expensive and that I have government money for this, however she said this does not matter. She added that Inuit will know that I will write my book and that my work will only benefit me, and that they are giving their stories away. “This is why they want to be paid,” she indicated. In both the *Unikkaartuit* study and this dissertation fieldwork, only elders were paid. It is a general understanding in the community that elders will be paid for participating in research, although many researchers who come to Igloolik pay all their participants. I did not have the funds for this, and I was concerned that paying

everyone, especially the youth, would change my relationship with them. I was a collaborator with the Youth Society.

*Qallunaat* are generally seen by Inuit as overly talkative, asking too many questions, and being bossy and pushy. This is what Condon (1988: 129) called the “*Qallunaat* boss syndrome.” Even when I was in Igloolik’s youth centre, the younger children sometimes would ask me if I was “the boss.” I was aware that they asked this because I was the outsider *Qallunaat*, and in my work I tried not to fit into this mold. Given my project, however, I could not always avoid it. One Inuk man, age 48, came for an interview to the bunkhouse. I had explained my partnership with Embrace Life Council and that this project had emerged from the *Unikkaartuit* project. Nevertheless, he told me, “I know your kind of people. I have seen many researchers just like you. You come here and ask personal questions, and that’s not the way we do things in our culture.” This man, who I saw frequently and with whom I felt comfortable, disclosed in this interview about his experience of sexual abuse by a priest in the residential school he was sent to, and how this had scarred his life. I did not ask many questions, and most of my interviews were conversational. As he was leaving the interview, he invited me for a meal with his family at his house. One Inuk I saw frequently, a woman in her late 30s, paid me a compliment. She said that *Qallunaat* had a very narrow way of thinking, but that I was open-minded and that I “think like an Inuk.” She spoke about *Qallunaat* being “surrounded by their words.” One is reminded of Victor Turner (1980), crediting Max Gluckman who noted that the term “anthropologist” derives from the Greek “talking about people,” which Turner translated as “a gossip.” Among Inuit, gossip has traditionally been taboo.

Anti-Inuit attitudes continue to be experienced by Inuit. During my first few months in Igloolik, I learned that the White manager of the Co-op store was known to be very racist. I had noticed him following me suspiciously during my first visit to the store, and thought it might be because I was new, or possibly because of my darker skin. I inherited a darker and non-Nordic complexion from my mother, whose background is Roma/Gypsy. This may help me when I am with Aboriginal people, but it didn't with this manager. I later heard him speaking to his Inuit employees like children. Iglulingmiut did not like him. One Inuk woman who worked there told me that when she had spoken to this manager about the value Inuit place on their elders, he replied to her that "Inuit should not pay attention to them [elders] because soon they will all be gone, and then what will everyone do?" During the time I spent with younger Inuit males, I heard talk about hurting him. This did not take place, as this manager was fired because of some missing money. He was sent back south, or perhaps to another Inuit community to do the same thing. I also heard some *Qallunaat* who worked for the northern government speak about Inuit in disparaging ways. One social worker in Iqaluit, who had worked in two Inuit communities, referred to them as children, saying "they act like children and need to be treated like children." A publication in 1947 by the Department of Mines and Resources Canada, *The Book of Wisdom for Eskimo*, included the text "The King is helping all the children in his lands. He is giving aid to the Eskimo children and has instructed His servants the Police to proceed in this way" (cited in Hicks & White 2000: 49). It is a very old colonial attitude to see Indigenous peoples as children, and to treat them that way (Maybury-Lewis 1997; York 1989).

Many Inuit did not show up for interviews that had been scheduled. This was not the case very much during the *Unikkaartuit* study in Igloolik, and I attributed this to my having had Inuit co-researchers with me at the time. I was now on my own. But I noticed that Inuit often enough did not show up for each other either. A general interpersonal pattern emerged for me. Middle-aged and older people almost always showed up for interviews, while younger males often had to be rescheduled after a no-show. Younger females never showed up for a scheduled meeting or interview with me. This pattern was also evident in casual, everyday interactions. Men over the age of 30 passing me on their snowmobiles or the rare automobile almost always nodded and smiled at me, as they did when walking in the community, when we saw each other in the store, and so on. Brief conversations with strangers were very frequent. This was also the case with women from the eldest down to women in their early to mid 40s. Women in their 30s would often look at me and smile, but just as often not. Among both male and female Inuit under the age of about 25, there was very little eye contact from strangers. Younger males would drive by me on their snowmachines holding a stern face with their eyes straight ahead. The younger women would usually look down or away from me. This avoidance of gaze with me by young women was apparent at all the Youth Society meetings, attended by both males and females. The males usually did most of the talking at these meetings and the females would sit together, rarely saying anything to the group. There is an older Inuit tradition of women not calling attention to themselves in certain public settings, and it may be that some of this was in play (McGrath 1997). At these meetings the males interacted easily with me, joking with me as they did with each other, while the females were mostly quiet. But the females would sometimes speak and even joke with the males,

but not with me in the group. Some of the female Youth Society members would speak with me easily on the phone, occasionally phoning me, but in public this was not the case. There was a significant age-gender effect taking place in my interactions with Inuit.

I pursued three research questions during my fieldwork. The first looked at changes in kin and community relationships since the settlement was formed in the late 1960s. The middle-aged Inuit were the most interested in speaking about this, as they were young when they moved into the settlement. Some families were in Igloodik before the settlement. Many were particularly interested in my attention to family change, as this was a significant theme in the *Unikkaartuit* study on distress and wellness. One Inuk, a middle-aged woman who was a counsellor with Social Services, exclaimed. “It is about time we focused on this.” I found elders keen to talk about continuity and change in *naalaqtuq* (age-related respect and obedience) and *ungajuq* (affection), the central features of Inuit social/kin relations studied by Damas (1968b). These conversations took place in many settings, but mostly in the homes of Iglulingmiut.

I expected to have difficulty with the second research question on changes in sexual/romantic relationships among youth, and on their cultural model of sex/romance today. Condon and Stern (1993) found Inuit youth to be very reluctant to talk about romantic relationships and sex, especially female youth even with a female interviewer. As predicted, no young women would speak with me about this. Indeed, it was difficult and almost impossible for me to speak with young Inuit women about anything, as it was almost impossible to be alone with them. This said something of gender relations, of gender-*Qallunaat* relations, and age. I tried interviewing some of the female members of the Youth Society with no success. This was not at all true of middle aged and elder

women. Male youth had much difficulty speaking to me about this subject, more than any other topic I asked about including suicide. The most information I received directly from male youth was from those with whom I was working for the Amituq Youth Society. This usually took place in the bunkhouse when they were visiting. I also interviewed some of the Inuit women counsellors about this in the Social Services building. I did observe and gather much information about the first two research questions through participant observation, merely being there and living with Inuit. In my second question I am thus trying to understand the lineaments of distress and suicide among Inuit male youth in particular.

The third question, the one I viewed as the most important, was on youth action toward suicide prevention and well-being in the community. I wanted to study the process of such action, why and how youth became involved, the perceived benefit of youth action, and community responses to it. I knew one youth who was a member of the Youth Society, Joseph Auksak, who had participated in my dissertation planning meeting with several elders in Iqaluit 1.5 years earlier. Joseph told me that he had talked about my project during one of the Youth Society meetings, and that I was placed on the agenda of a meeting in the near future where I would be invited to talk about it. This was very shortly after my arrival in Igloolik. Weeks passed, and seeing Joseph quite often he would keep telling me that I was on their agenda. He introduced me to their president, who smiled and said that I was on their agenda. A month went by, then two months, and by the end of the third month I was quite concerned that they were not interested in me. I spoke about this with Joseph, who reassured me that I was on their agenda and that they were interested in working with me. After a while it no longer felt right asking if I was



still on their agenda. I emailed committee member George Wenzel to express my concern that I was on the outside and afraid I would not be able to interact with the Youth Society. George, who has been working in Nunavut for decades, was a great supporter of my research ideas and plans and had already helped me immensely. He responded with a calm, knowing reply telling me to be patient, that my being there over time will end up making all the difference, and that I should not worry. It made me feel better knowing that my experience was not unusual in anthropology, but I still felt that the youth in the Society wanted to have nothing to do with me. I did not understand, as this was such a contrast with my experience with the Youth Committee in Igloolik in 1998, with whom I had worked very closely even before coming to the community. This was a new cohort of youth, seven years later, who knew nothing of what I had been doing earlier in the community. I was locked out.

One event completely changed this. Lori Idlout, my Inuit colleague and friend originally from Igloolik who is Executive Director of Embrace Life Council in Iqaluit, was planning to come to Igloolik to meet with the staff at Social Services along with other community members interested in youth wellness and suicide prevention. This meeting was taking place in the beginning of my fourth month there. Lori asked me to come to this meeting, where she would speak about the project. My dissertation has been in partnership with Embrace Life Council, the Inuit organization focused on suicide prevention and community wellness across Nunavut. Lori is a leader in this field in Nunavut, highly respected, and being from Igloolik her visit was especially important. Attending this meeting was Allan Auksaq, the president of the Youth Society. My project was the last agenda item of a long but very active meeting (I was actually on the agenda),

also attended by a few of the most prominent elders in the community. One of these elders, a woman named Leonie Qrunnut, had been involved in the *Unikkaartuit* project in 1998 with her husband Anthony. The meeting was in Inuktitut, so I understood very little. When it came time to talk about the project, most of the discussion was still in Inuktitut, but Lori translated quite a bit for me. The woman elder also spoke for some time, in Inuktitut of course. The Inuit there seemed quite interested in our project. At the end of the meeting, Allan approached me and said that he really wanted me to come to a meeting of the Youth Society. They met each week at someone's house, and I was invited to their next meeting. After the meeting I spoke with the elder and Lori, who again translated, and the elder said that she would be very glad to speak with me about any of the topics we were examining. I left the meeting with new hope. George was right, as Inuit could see I was staying, and my being physically and visually associated with Lori at this community meeting, and having her and the elder speak about the project, opened a huge door for me. I felt a little like Geertz after the cockfight. Incidents like these can make all the difference in fieldwork, with rapport being gained by symbols and actions of likeness. The bridge of difference can sometimes be altered quite dramatically.

The first Youth Society meeting I attended, the week after the Social Services meeting, was at the house of one of the female members. This member was soon no longer a member, and the Society had no place to have their weekly meeting. I suggested that they meet at the bunkhouse, which pleased them. I had suddenly gone from being on the outside to having them meet every week in my bunkhouse. The ethnography had taken a huge turn for the better. The youth spoke with each other in a mix of Inuktitut and English, so I was able to follow the discussions. I did not participate in discussions for

some time, but merely listened and offered everyone tea and snacks during these evenings. When I did participate it was usually minimal, except on a few occasions when they asked for my opinions or when I later became directly involved in their work. My work with the Youth Society will be described in more detail in Chapter six, however I took an active role in some of their community action. For example, with Natar Ungalaq, his wife Sidoni, and Lucy Tulugardjuk, who had once been members of the Igloolik youth committee themselves – Lucy when I was there in 1998 – we organized a brainstorming session with these youth on getting their ideas for activities and programs for the Youth Center they were planning to re-open. After this I met with some of the leaders of this Society to put together themes from these brainstorming sessions, and to apply for government grants to help fund these activities. It is thus not only the style of my research as participatory/collaborative, but my helping to create what I was there to study, that gives reason for writing myself into this text.

While Inuit-*Qallunaat* difference is embedded in the colonial agenda, one that has often prevailed in the anthropology of Indigenous peoples, this difference is a smaller part of the analytic frame in this ethnography. My approach is an attempt to give “voice” to what matters to Iglulingmiut, to their concerns, struggles, and actions toward suicide prevention and more generally their reclamation of collective agency. But these concerns, struggles, and actions are themselves imbedded in the colonial agenda and history. I try to account for some of what Simpson (2007) has called ethnographic refusal, what is *not* discussed with me, within both colonial and local ontologies.

I did have an opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with women. Through Isuma and the filmmaking, I was able to spend time in one of the old matchbox

houses that was being used to make all the costumes for the film *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*. It was being run by Micheline Ammaq, the Isuma Costume Designer. Sitting on the floor of the tiny house were usually about 4-5 elder women, about the same number of young women, usually teenagers, and Micheline. The youth were there as part of Isuma's mandate to involve youth in their work, primarily to help them learn more about Inuit culture. All the women were constantly sewing, mostly caribou skin, making parkas, boots, mitts, and hats. I joined them frequently, the only male in the group, and the elders taught me to sew caribou boots and parkas. They were patient with me, and I felt accepted by this group. I learned much from them. I tried to set up interviews with some of these youth, but being young women they never showed up. I was, however, able to speak with some of them in the presence of the elders about their life, and the meaning of the work they were doing there. Zach Kunuk once appeared in the door and saw me sewing on the floor with the women. He pointed his finger at me exclaimed loudly in Inuktitut and then in English that I was violating a taboo by being a male sewing with the women. Everybody laughed, and I was relieved that I was not breaking any taboo. At least I hoped I was not.

This fieldwork is based on continuous discussions with Inuit during evenings at the bunkhouse, being with Inuit in many settings, and visiting all the agencies and services in the community multiple times including Social Services, Community Wellness, Youth Centre, RCMP, the elementary and high schools, Arctic College, Health Centre, Isuma Film Company, and weekly meetings with the Amituq Youth Society. I had many conversations with Inuit in the only two social venues in the community, the Co-op and Northern stores. I did not attend church services, which is the other location

for community members to come together. I wondered whether this affected how I was perceived in the community, very different from Rasing (2008: 75) who attended both Anglican and Catholic church services regularly during his fieldwork in Igloolik as one of his forms of “impression management.” I interviewed 25 Inuit in some depth whose ages ranged from 17 to an elder in her 80s. Parental permission was obtained for the interview with the 17-year-old, who at that time was president of the Youth Society. Informed consent was done orally as permitted for this study by the McGill Ethics Committee. I learned from the *Unikkaartuit* study that oral consent is much preferred by Inuit to signing a consent form. One Inuk male friend in Igloolik told me that he found the usual consent forms requiring a signature to be “insulting.” I also interviewed six *Qallunaat* in depth, the two elementary school principals, one outgoing and the other about to start, the psychiatric nurse and another nurse at the Health Centre, and the Director and one teacher from Arctic College in Igloolik. All interviews were recorded digitally and downloaded to a computer. I transcribed the interviews along the way during my time in Igloolik. I was in many other long conversations during the year with other *Qallunaat* working in Igloolik. Some of the recorded interviews were with Inuit youth participating in the filming of *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* that was taking place, and these were coordinated with the Igloolik film company Isuma. Fieldnotes were written almost every day in the late evenings, after my visitors left, or in the late afternoons/early evenings before their arrival. All interviews, archival material from the Oral History Project, and fieldnotes were coded and analyzed using HyperResearch qualitative software. This software crashed after all data were coded and took some time to recover with the help of techs from the software company. It did not function properly

following recovery and in all caused a significant delay in my work, however it proved to be of sufficient use for analysis.

The collaborative nature of this study continues with the analysis of narratives. I have shared the data with Lori Idlout and members of Embrace Life Council, and my interpretations with friends and colleagues from Igloolik. They share theirs with me. I am in regular contact with many of them, and as discussed we are developing new projects together. Consensus is not the goal of this work, and difference will be addressed. Indeed, differences of opinion emerged as an important theme in the community of Igloolik. My Inuit colleagues and I tend to agree on a great many things, and I continue to learn much from them.

About six months into my fieldwork I was speaking with an older Inuk male about my research, which he was very interested in. After listening to me talk about what I hoped to learn, he asked how long I was planning to stay. When I told him just under a year, adding that I had already been in Igloolik doing similar work a few years before, he looked at me seriously and offered that if I really want to learn anything I should stay for at least five years. I thought that he had a good point, but that in anthropology this was almost impossible. I shrugged it off, thinking that this is how such research is done. Quite some time later, about one month before I was going to be leaving Igloolik to return to the south, I was scrambling to get the last interviews done and any find any other information. I had many more questions than I had started with, and anxiously felt like I was only beginning my fieldwork. I thought about what the older Inuk had said about needing to stay for at least five years, and realized he was right. This was my second fieldwork visit to Igloolik, on this venture for nine months, and I now believed that I had

only just scratched the surface of the issues I was investigating. My Inuktitut was still poor. I was concerned that I had next to nothing. Then I remembered having a similar feeling after the *Unikkaartuit* fieldwork, and finding that I had used only a portion of the huge data set of interview transcripts. I realized only later that the information I had was quite rich, in spite of my having been in Nunavut then for only three months. It is the ethnographer's challenge to write thick descriptions when the reality of an outsider trying to live with and participate in a community ends up being rather thin.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Dynamics of Colonial Change in Nunavummut Kinship and Social Organization**

#### The Sound of Wood

Songs are used to to pass on the passage of incidents... *Qallunaat* did not have access to come up to Igloolik long ago. There were some rumours that some *Qallunaat* may get into Igloolik and settle. At this particular time, when I was a child, a song was made and I would like to sing it:

*Aya, I think I have heard, he has heard from the wind,*

*Aya, I think I have heard, he has heard from the sea,*

*Aya, aya, I pretend to hear, he pretends to hear the sound of wood from the sea,*

*Aya yaya, I pretend to see, he pretends to see, from the sea.*

I do not wish to go on because it might get lengthy and I know this will have to be transcribed. This particular song was made when it was said that some day Igloolik will be settled by *Qallunaat*. It was said that all the places that currently were inhabited without *Qallunaat* would be settled by *Qallunaat*. Because of this rumour this song was made to be used in a drum dance. His wife would sing it accompanied by another woman, while the composer of the song would be dancing with the drum. This type of merriment was known as *qaggi*. *Qaggis* were held when things were satisfactory without a period of scarcity around Igloolik. This was held especially when conditions were favourable and there were no epidemics



to shy away from outlying camps. We would gather to one location and make merriment. The song I just sang was meant for this type of a gathering called *qaggi* and that's where I learned it. This song was made long ago knowing the inevitability of the *Qallunaat* settlement.

Elder Noah Piugattuk, May 11, 1987  
Tape No. IE-064, No. 5. Trans. Louis Tapardjuk, data entered by Leah Otak.  
Igloodik Oral History Project

In this chapter I investigate the social-historical background against which Inuit youth in Nunavut have one of the highest suicide rates in the world. In spite of the recent land claim and political territory of Nunavut, Inuit society in Canada has much social distress that, in addition to suicide, includes high levels of alcohol and drug abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse of minors, and crime (Brody 1977; Burkardt 2004; Condon 1988; O'Neil 1983; McElroy 1977). Rather than taking an approach common to suicide studies, which would be centred within the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry and focused on individual risk factors, I take a cultural and historical perspective and consider the view that suicide is a symbol of social suffering. Given that the Inuit youth suicide epidemic began but twenty years ago and is now a major public health problem, it becomes necessary to examine what has changed in Inuit culture over the decades, particularly Inuit youth culture, such that social perturbation should have reached such a volume today. I do not focus on suicide in this chapter, as I do that in Chapter five. Here I examine the dominant forms of sociocultural change among Inuit over the last several decades. My primary focus is on Inuit of Nunavut (Nunavummut), and the Iglulingmiut with whom I was living.

Attributions for youth suicide among Indigenous peoples, abnormally high in North America and Australia, have ranged from proximal factors such as alcohol and substance abuse, depression, and unemployment (Aoun & Gregory 1998; Boothroyd, Kirmayer, Spreng, Malus, & Hodgins 2001; Haggarty, Cernovsky, Kermeen & Mersky 2000; Kahn 1986), to more distal ones like rapid culture change, collective powerlessness, and anomie (Condon 1990; Kirmayer 1994; Kosky, Eshkevari, Goldney, & Hassan, 1998; Kral 1998; Leineweber & Arensman 2003; Sinclair 1998; Tatz 2001). Histories and ethnographies of Indigenous peoples and colonialism have documented many details of powerlessness and oppression, some of which meet the criteria for genocide from the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention (Dickason 1997; Maybury-Lewis 2002; Neu & Therrien 2003; Tatz 1995, 2003; York 1989; Wilson 1999 [1998]). Smelser (2004: 38) includes colonialism in the newer term of cultural trauma, which he defines as “an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole.” Debates continue regarding altruistic motivations of assimilationist policies of governments such as Canada’s, and the voluntary nature of assimilation. Nevertheless, colonized or imperialized Indigenous peoples are too often, by both etic and emic standards, suffering. This suffering stands defined in the context of Western standards of physical and mental health, education, wage labour, hope, and as the loss of traditional social structure that previously maintained a culture’s sense of its own well-being. Much of this suffering also becomes centred on poverty (see Farmer 2003).

Colonialism has been viewed as one country taking over another for its own benefit, typically as “the conquest and control of nonwhite, non-European peoples” as “a

triangle of power in which the people at the top claim they have the right to control the people at the bottom” (Yazzie 2000: 39, 43). Colonialism typically involves the settling of another nation, while imperialism is the taking over without the settling. The fundamental axiom concerning colonialism used in this paper is one of control by a state over a people not originally its own, and colonialism will be used here as a generic umbrella term that includes imperialism. Although it is a tacit understanding that externally-imposed culture change will cause a people social problems along many dimensions, and in the case of Indigenous peoples around the world this has been demonstrated empirically, my position is that our understanding of *how* colonialism may cause social distress is not well known. How does “colonialism” cause distress? I will argue that such a question is so complex as to be meaningless without a social and local magnifying glass. One must look at the relationship between, and changes in, social organization and relatedness in order to begin to address this question. The working of colonial social change will be found in the details, at the levels of kinship, social structure, interpersonal relations, and subjectivity. Without these levels of analysis, our knowledge of any “negative effects” of colonialism remains in a conceptual vacuum.

When one looks closely at more specific local groupings of Indigenous people, great variations are found regarding both colonial impact and Indigenous response. My approach here follows that of Nicholas Thomas (1994), who wrote of there being many colonialisms rather than any single code, and of the need to look closely at practices and subjectivities in particular places. The Inuit of Nunavut have their own history of colonialism that differs markedly from First Nations and Métis histories in Canada. It has very much been a *colonialisme interne* or domestic colonialism conducted from within a

nation, so to speak, even though it has been in the form of a powerful outsider taking over an insider culture (Petit & Visart de Bocarmé 2008: 14). Inuit signed no treaties and had no economically and politically restricting reservations, yet the government created aggregated and restricting settlements. While numerous studies exist of culture change among the Inuit since the second world war, few have looked specifically at culture change, particularly among youth, over time. Burke (2005: 147) notes that social change is less often internal to any social system, but “in practice social change is often provoked by encounters between cultures.” In this chapter I examine various changes in Nunavummiut<sup>3</sup> kinship and social organization since World War II, but primarily after the Canadian government established active control over Inuit and their land.

Rather than addressing government and other non-Inuit agency motivations, or Inuit motivations, concerning social and cultural change, I focus here on the change itself. The actual processes of White or *Qallunaat* government or agency rule, and of Inuit compliance or resistance, is a related yet separate topic. It is a complex story that has been described by numerous *Qallunaat* and more recently Inuit authors. Paine (1977a) wrote of Inuit colonialism as welfare or “accidental” colonialism, where *Qallunaat* were not only repressive and exploitive but also solicitous and liberal. These disparate points of view, and those labeled acculturationist versus adaptationist, have been reframed by Wenzel (2001). Acculturation has sometimes been equated with “bad” change, such that Inuit were and are becoming Kabloonamiut (of the *Qallunaat* or Western world) from their traditional Nunamiut (of the land) selves. Adaptation, on the other hand, has often

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<sup>3</sup> The suffix *-miut* means “of a place,” where place name precedes the suffix. *Nunavummiut* thus means “people of Nunavut” or “people of our land.” Iglulingmiut means people of Igloodik.

been “good” change seen as “ordered modification” without a major loss of traditional identity (Wenzel 2001: 45). Wenzel argues that both are true, as a “dance of the dialectic” (47), whereby Inuit have experienced dramatic change yet have also maintained a deep continuity of culture. He shows how the introduction of the snowmobile, for example, has created financial ties, often problematic, to the running, maintenance, and often sharing of these machines, but how it has also become folded into many Inuit identifying the hunter with the snowmobile as a “better hunter” (e.g., Kemp 1971). Wenzel’s framework is in line with Champagne’s (2006) argument that any colonialism must avoid deterministic explanations of a helpless people, and needs to consider Indigenous agency and the cultural, political, and economic components of self-preservation.

Examining changes in the structure and function of Inuit kinship and social organization since World War II, however, brings issues of autonomy and control into focus. I argue here that colonialism has its most salient effect on ritual and relationship, to borrow terms from Calloway (2003: 37) describing essential features of Native societies. Victor Turner (1974) argued that ritual provides *communitas*, solidarity, and its sudden loss will have a negative effect on relationships (see Herzfeld 2001). That the most significant colonial effect has been on relationships may be surmised from Brody’s (2000: 294) description of a central feature of hunter-gatherers, when he writes “they have established and relied upon respect for their children, other adults, and the resources on which people depend. If these relationships are not respectful, then everything will go wrong.” Relationship is the crux, the nucleus, of Indigenous society. The dialectic of change has brought both opportunity and difficulty to Inuit. Here we examine autonomy, control, and change in the context of relatedness, mostly among Inuit but also between

Inuit and *Qallunaat*. I try to identify some of these changes that have been salient in terms of distress and well-being, and conclude with a set of questions needing to be addressed toward a better understanding of the relationship between culture change, distress, and well-being among Inuit.

### **Kinship and Social Structure**

In keeping with logic and the precedent of several studies of modern culture change among the Inuit, traditional Inuit kinship and social structure is first described to determine a baseline before examining changes to these structures. Given page limitations, this is a relatively brief review. It is fortunate that a number of ethnographies of kinship and social structure exist that describe, in great detail, these structures prior to the effects of what Wenzel (1991) has termed the government period that began after the second world war and heavily after 1953. I will focus here primarily on the structure of Inuit kinship and other forms of alliance or relatedness, following Guemple (1972a) who referred to their social system as one of alliance based on negotiation and reciprocity.

Inuit are described as having been semi-nomadic, following a seasonal hunting pattern of snow (iglu) or sod (after about 1930, for more permanence after the fox trade began) houses in larger winter camps and skin tents in smaller, more dispersed summer camps (Mauss (1979a [1950]), Damas 1963). Damas (1976) found that among Iglulingmiut and other groups of the central Arctic, the summer tent was usually occupied by the nuclear family while winter houses typically contained extended family members. Many winter camps saw Inuit building the *qaggiq*, a large iglu for social functions. Wenzel (n.d., ca. 1980) described Inuit of the Clyde River region on the northeast coast

of Baffin Island as highly mobile yet remaining within their home areas. There was a primary wintering residence, with an alternative site depending on snow conditions for iglu-building. Inuit would move inland to hunt caribou in the summer. In August the group would split up between hunting for caribou and arctic char. Following the fishing run, the groups would move by the coast, hunt large sea mammals, and build iglus when the snow and ice came. Particular tools, techniques, and numbers of hunters were needed for each type of hunt.

Inuit social organization has had as a culture core what Steward (1955) called the family level of societal integration, and what Burch (1975) similarly labeled a family-oriented kinship system and society. Burch studied the Inupiat of the North Slope of Alaska, who closely resemble Nunavummit. By “family-oriented,” he was referring to the nuclear family together with other blood and marital ties, which included vague boundaries for bilateral descent and a complex marriage structure based on economic exchange. Burch found Inuit to have both domestic or conjugal/nuclear and local or extended family types. The average household had seven persons that included 2-3 children. Local-type families usually lived in dwellings very close to each other, and have been called bands by other authors. Heinrich (1963: 67) studied the Inupiat kinship system and found it to be centred on adaptation toward subsistence and the environment, with relatively “small population aggregates, low population density, high degree of mobility, high degree of interdependence, low degree of permanent attachment to group and local area, and the relative absence of enduring local groups.” Heinrich noted the centrality of kinship as the integrative social mechanism.

There has been some debate in the literature on the openness or flexibility of Inuit kinship, with some arguing that Inuit can freely “choose” their kin and that theirs is an optative or fictive kin system (Bodenhorn 2000; Nuttall 2000; Trott 1982). This approach takes the perspective of David Schneider (1968, 1984), who held that kinship is a Western construct and argued for a relativist position, extending kinship to mean any close social relations. This has been countered most prominently by Harold Scheffler (1976, 2001a), who has argued that consanguineal and affinal kinship is universal and forms the core of relationships in all societies. I discussed this with Inuit (Iglulingmiut) a few years ago in a meeting where we were planning a study on Inuit kinship, and there was a consensus that the Schefflerian account fit their experience. Burch (1975) similarly found the notion of flexibility in Inuit kinship and social organization to be exaggerated in the literature, and Pospisil (1964) showed the existence of behavioural kinship prescriptions in spite of flexibility in role allocation. The centrality of consanguine kin for Inuit is remarkably stable. The Schneider-Scheffler debate has often been labelled one of culture versus biology, respectively.

This as a false dichotomy, as Scheffler is also a cultural constructionist (Scheffler 1991). Maxwell (1986) found support for both theorists among Repulse Bay Inuit, with wide variability across individuals and even across the same people over time. He found flexibility in kin *term* usage. For Inuit it may be an issue of semantics, as kin terms have been used without believing that the person is actually that kin reality (see Briggs 1970; Willmott 1968 [1960]). As one middle-aged Inuk male said during the meeting I just described, “I may call you my brother, but I know who my real brothers are.” In an analysis of Inuit social flexibility, Adams (1972) concluded that Inuit became more



“flexible” with increased acculturation to White or *Qallunaat* society, and that precontact Inuit had consistent kin roles and responsibilities. Even Nuttall (2000), a kinship relativist, reported that in spite of flexibility in kin role, kin rules still determined moral obligations, rights, duties, and behaviour.

Guemple (1972a) described Inuit kinship as negotiable, but like Pospisil (1964) stressed that this had to do with social role rather than kin status. He noted that kin terms may be used for social bonding more generally, for reasons of affection-closeness (*ungayuyq*) and respect-obedience (*naalaqtuq*), terms to be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The strongest family bonds were generally first for father-son and mother-daughter, then for same-sex siblings starting with older-younger brothers. Damas (1963) saw the strongest relationship among central Arctic Inuit (Iglulik, Netsilik, Copper) to be between patrilateral parallel cousins for males, and between matrilineal cousins for females.

Intergenerational relationships were very strong, and “child attitude of respect for parents was paramount” while grandparents were seen as “the primary repositories of wisdom and knowledge” (Burch 1975: 155). Collings (1999) referred to elders as having traditionally been at the nexus of Inuit social relations, and described an educational function as perhaps their most important social role. The elders’ word, according to Inuit author Joe Otokiak (2004: 69), “was the unwritten law.” The male sibling group was very important for ties within the local group. Sibling relationships involved much economic sharing, with older siblings having authority over younger ones. The most loyalty and stress was seen between brothers, with the strength of sibling relationships being second to the parent-child relationship (Burch 1975). Inuit children learned most of their

knowledge and skills by observing and interacting with their parents, what Condon (1988: 157) referred to as the “continuity in parent-child relationships.” Family male heads who were not kin to each other were *nulliq* (emotionally and economically reciprocal), and the extended family was the basic economic unit. Kin terms were used as forms of address for descending generations (grandparent-child-grandchild), with some variation for affinal terms and even more for ascending generations. Some individual variability existed for the use of kin terms, but they were used consistently across Nunavut and there was much overlap among them (Damas 1963; Maxwell 1986).

Damas (1972) and others have found traditional Inuit kin networks to be centred on consanguine, affinal, spouse exchange, and adoptive relations, with kin-based social structure being stronger in the central and eastern than the western Arctic. Heinrich (1963) identified four forms of marriage: residential monogamous, residential polygamous or occasionally polyandrous, spouse exchange, and divorce. Guemple (1961) included remarriage as another form of marriage. Briggs (1970) added namesake as a fifth important form of kinship bonding. To this Balikci (1970: 94) added “collaboration in the field of subsistence and patterned dyadic relationships” as supplementing kinship within the core of Inuit social integration and regulation. Patterned and, according to Vallee (1962), institutionalized, dyadic relationships or partnerships were among kin and non-kin, varied in form across areas, and included hunting, seal-meat-sharing, dancing, singing (song cousins), drum dancing, gift-giving, wrestling, rivalry, mutual aid/cooperation, joking/teasing, avoidance, the namesake or *atiq*, various forms of marital/sexual relations (e.g., spouse exchange), song partnerships for duels, and trapping (accommodating the Hudson’s Bay Company – HBC – fox industry) (Damas 1963, 1972;

Guemple 1972a; Maxwell 1986; Vallee 1968 [1962]; Wenzel 1995). Vallee (1962) noted that personal friendships certainly also existed, as did antagonistic relationships. Kinship privileges were extended to non-kin formal partnerships, integrating household units (Rubel 1961). The importance of dyadic partnerships is also seen linguistically, as verb conjugation in Inuktitut comes in singular, *dual*, and plural forms.

Child betrothals were common, usually initiated by the boy's parents except in the southwestern Arctic. It is generally understood that betrothal and exchange marriage have served as a significant form of establishing alliances between families (Lowie 1948). Among central Arctic Inuit (Igloodik, Copper, Netsilik), betrothal might take place before birth, and it was usually done by parents or grandparents (Damas 1975). For St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik, elders were consulted regarding betrothal. Among Netsilik Inuit, betrothal was initiated by the boy's mother or grandmother shortly after his birth, however parents did not always intervene (Balikci 1970). These agreements between families were not necessarily binding, however a breach of this agreement led to what Kjellström (1973) reported to be the most common type of quarrel. Sometimes parents would adopt a child as a future partner for their own child. Occasionally a boy would choose to stay with a family where a girl was present, taking her as a partner when she reached puberty. Women were sometimes taken against their will. The late elder Rosie Igloodiyuk of Igloodik told the story of her hiding from the man who came to take her as his wife. She died at age 96 a few years ago, and her grandson told me that she had been a shaman in her day. Rosie's mother found her and turned her over to the man, who tied Rosie to his *kamutiq* (sledge) and took her away. Rosie said that she eventually loved him, and missed him greatly after he died.

There was no ceremonial marriage ritual, and a couple was considered more permanently bonded after the birth of their first child and usually stayed together if they had children. Girls married at age 14-15, and boys around age 20 after a long apprenticeship of having learned to be a skilful hunter (Balikci 1970). Marital partners were highly interdependent (Brody 1991 [1975]). Marriage among Inuit has been described in detail by Kjellström (1973). For many groups the wife would move in with her husband's family, or patrilocally. The husband was able to move in with his wife's family if that family was in need of hunters. In some areas, initial matrilocal location was followed by patrilocal after the birth of the first child (Damas 1972). "The marital unit was the basic collaborative unit in Netsilik society," wrote Balikci (1970: 103). The strongest form of *ungayuyq* (affection-closeness) for groups in the central Arctic was for affinal ties and between siblings (Damas 1963), however Burch (1975) reported that this bond was relatively weak among the Inupiat. The affine was reported by Heinrich (1963) to always be an outsider to the consanguine family among the Inupiat.

Sex roles tended to be highly differentiated yet interdependent. Some women occasionally hunted and some men occasionally made or repaired clothing. The woman's work was primarily around the home, preparing food, making skin clothing, and arranging the interior of the tent or sod/snow house. The man was the hunter, toolmaker, and he constructed dwellings and the *kamutiq* (sledge) (Giffen 1930). If the couple split up, children typically stayed with the mother. "Remarriage" was not uncommon, and was expected after a spouse's death or in the absence of children. Consanguine marriage was generally forbidden, although some groups allowed marriage between cousins. Divorce was neither traumatic nor complete as ties, responsibilities, sexuality, and kin terms

continued, all socially condoned. Children of future spouses were considered related (Heinrich 1972).

Plural marriage was usually polygyny, and occasionally polyandry (both termed *igluqatigiit* or “house companions”; Maxwell 1986). Goody (1973) argued that plural marriage supported economic relations within and between groups, as additional partners were economically valuable. Damas (1976) described it as an infrequent practice across most Inuit groups, however Taylor (1984) indicates that over a third of marriages were polygenous in a Labrador sample in the later 1700s. In an earlier study, Damas (1963) had informants telling him it was relatively common. Taylor noted the presence of “wife-stealing,” and that co-wives could be from the same nuclear family including mothers and daughters. He cited a large sex ratio as the reason for this.

Exchange marriage or spouse exchange, *kipuktuk*, *aipaq* (in Repulse Bay), or *nuliizariik* (among Inupiat) was prevalent across the entire Arctic (Guemple 1972a), and although usually brief the relationship was considered permanent (Burch 1972). It was of two types, what Guemple (1961) called secular and ritual. Secular was the more common, and was “primarily a matter of convenience and agreement” and “accomplished without much attention” (2), usually lasting a few days, sometimes weeks, occasionally months, and rarely as a permanent trade. Most exchanges, but not all, appear to have been arranged by men. Ritual exchanges, which Guemple found evidence for from Alaska to the eastern Arctic, involved ritual dress and were often in the context of a celebration for the appeasing of spirits in the central and eastern Arctic while in the west they were centred around hunting festivals. Lantis (1946) has also noted that religious ceremonies were more formal and extensively planned in the western Arctic than in the central or

eastern Arctic. The decision of who is exchanged with whom was not always up to the people involved. Those being exchanged were typically and perhaps exclusively women, and the sexual union would be for only one or a few nights. Birket-Smith (1959: 140) reported that jealousy played no part in this exchange, yet male proprietary considerations were evident if a woman had sex with another without her man's consent: "When a man punishes his wife for being unfaithful, it is because she has trespassed upon his rights; the next evening he will very probably lend her himself." Damas (1972) found that spouse exchange was an extension of the kinship network. Birket-Smith believed this "conferring of sexual rights" functioned as an important means of strengthening cooperative bonds. Graburn (1969) reported that kin ties were established, as children of the women being exchanged were considered (fictive) siblings. This was supported by Heinrich and Anderson (1971). Guemple (1961) wrote that little was otherwise known about Inuit spouse exchange at the time he was writing. Given that this was almost 50 years ago and that the practice was coming to a halt at that time, knowledge about this will now be through oral history and archival data.

Adoption among Inuit was described by Guemple (1979:1) as a "pervasive social institution," indicating that slightly over one third of the children in many communities were adopted. This has continued, as Dorais (1997) reported that 32% of Quaqtamuit in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) are adopted. Adoption incorporated the permanence of kinship ties (Heinrich 1963). Traditionally, adoption took place prior to one year of age and often at birth. Among some Inuit groups, gifts were given in exchange for the child. The child can maintain kin ties with its natal family, and use the same kin terms for it and the adopting family. A connection is also made between the two families. Furthermore,

Trott (2002) argues that social relations of the past are continued when a child is named after a deceased person and then adopted by that person's widow or widower to, at some level, "be" the deceased person. It is a form of *angerlartoqut* or "returning home" noted by Nuttall (1992) and Soby (1986). Damas (1976) described adoption as a kinship obligation within the nuclear family among the Copper Inuit, including older parents and their children and grandchildren, if a need for children was perceived. Other adoptions were also common but less obligatory across families. This was similar for most Inuit groups. Some have suggested that the adopted child, *tiguaq*, may not be treated as well as one's own children, particularly if the adoptee is non-kin (Damas 1963). Guemple (1979) notes that the term for orphan among the Inupik in the Belcher Islands is *ilijajuq*, in Rankin is *illiak*, and in Wales, Alaska is *iliapak*; the base form *ili-* means "punish" or to not be cared for. Inuit folklore depicts the orphan as poor, suffering, and needing to overcome obstacles, and Guemple (1979) found some evidence for this. Graburn (1969) noted that step-siblings did not feel as "close" to the family as did full siblings. It is clear, in any case, that adoption has been a significant component of kinship among the Inuit.

The namesake is prevalent across the Arctic, is considered an important form of relatedness or *turtularsiq* ("how we address each other") among Inuit, and has kinship implications. The hallmark of Inuit reincarnation is naming. The concept of the name-soul or name-spirit, *atik*, is given to the newborn or infant after a recently deceased person or, in some communities today, after a living person (Louis Tapardjuk 2001, personal communication). Among the Caribou Inuit the name would typically be given by a shaman or *angakok* (Birket-Smith 1929). Nuttall (1994) indicates that for Greenland Inuit, "[t]he acquisition of a dead person's name embellishes or even creates a living

person's genealogical and social identity. Kin relationships are thus extended beyond genealogical kin to encompass a wider network of people. As an image and memory of deceased persons, names are reference points in a complex network of interpersonal relationships." Damas (1972) found two types of namesake relationships: between the named and the deceased, and between persons sharing the same name. Among Iglulingmiut the latter is/was called *abbarik*, and would be expressed through gift exchange, e.g., food, following seasonal reunions. Damas viewed this exchange as more symbolic than economic. Not all Inuit today endorse the idea that the baby is the reincarnation of the namesake, which may be because of Christianity. Among some who do, it has been reported that the baby will cry until its "proper" name is identified; ill babies were sometimes "cured" by discovering their proper names. But Iglulingmiut I have spoken with all believe that a strong part of the deceased person whose name they have is with them and that their identity is in part of that person. Gender may be fluid in naming, and an infant of one sex may be named after someone of the opposite sex. Mary-Rouselière (1991: 76) found this to be true in the 1860 and 1870s among the "Central Eskimos" of northern Foxe Basin, which include Inuit from Igloodik, but not among Greenland Inuit ("Polar Eskimos") of that time. Cross-gender naming could make people more powerful, and shamans are occasionally cited as typically having been given several names of the opposite sex (Zacharias Kunuk 2002, personal communication; see Saladin d'Anglure 1994 [1986]).

Wenzel (1991) has pointed out that, for Inuit, subsistence is a highly complex activity linking kinship, ecology, economy, ideology, and larger social relations. Hunting for Native North Americans has been as much a religious as an economic endeavor,



whereby human and animal lives and spirits have been strongly linked (Calloway (2003). Adams (1972) saw subsistence hunting as *the* culture core of Inuit society. Hunting parties were organized and regulated by the oldest active male of the family, and these parties were usually made up of sibling or father-son relations (Damas 1963). Subsistence patterns have varied across Inuit groups, however sealing was and continues to be the most important and most common harvesting activity (Henshaw 1995; Pelly 2001). The Caribou Inuit of Keewatin and Nunamiut of the North Alaska coast are the only Inuit groups who relied almost exclusively on caribou (Trott 2002). O'Neil (1983) described the male-identity importance of hunting. The term "to hunt" is synonymous with manhood: *angunasuktuq*, whereby *angut* means "man," *nasuk* means "to try," and *tuq* means he, she, or it. The transition of boys into men as hunters began about age 15, completed by about age 30. Being a good hunter was a major criterion for being a good husband, and the hunter was also responsible for the well-being of elders. The best hunter of the camp, usually an older man, was the *isumatuq* or wise leader of the group.

Sharing in hunter-trapper societies has been based on jural rules or earned entitlement (Bodenhorn 2000). Meat-sharing (*ningiqtuq*) has played an important role in Inuit social relations, and continues to do so (Wenzel 1995). Indeed, Graburn (2006: 142) calls sharing an "iconic Inuit cultural trait." Patterns of meat-sharing varied across and even within Inuit groups, and formed an important type of patterned dyadic relationship. Dyadic meat-sharing relations were especially strong among Iglulingmiut. The seal is brought home whole by the hunter, and his wife will cut it up. For some groups, parts of the seal are distributed according to age, status, and gender. The rules of meat-sharing were explicit (Graburn 1969). Wenzel (1991) describes meat-sharing among Clyde Inuit,

which is similar to meat-sharing in Igloodik. Six forms of sharing are identified, centred primarily around the family and the *naalaqtuk* or obedience-respect dyad referred to earlier. Age predominates over kin role in terms of authority. There are family/extended family and also communal meals. Moses Kiohok of Bathurst Inlet, Nunavut, born in 1921, described a typical meat-sharing experience: “When hunters had caught their seal and Inuit had gotten their share, there would be many people gathered together in the successful hunter’s iglu. You shared the blubber and the meat with other Inuit, every portion of the seal meat. Even the broth you gave to the elders... When even just one seal was caught, you let a child fetch for his or her relatives – that is how it used to be... That is how the Inuit had shared their meat. They shared in the old days” (cited in Pelly 2001: 67). In Igloodik, I have attended seal meals in hunters’ homes and they were just as Moses Kiohok described, except that rather than being in an iglu they take place inside a heated house. As Wenzel (1991: 61) observed, “subsistence is a culturally embedded system of shared relations.” Inuit kinship and subsistence hunting, including partnerships and sharing, are woven together with the land to form a core, a tapestry, of Inuit culture.

Briggs (1968, 1970) conducted a unique study of Inuit emotional life while living in a traditional camp in the Keewatin region of Nunavut during 1963-1965. *Ungayuq*, or affection-closeness (*unga* is the wish to be with another person), was comprised of three facets: wanting to be with a loved person, wanting to express affection verbally or physically, and wanting to protect another. *Ungayuq* was associated most strongly with the nuclear family and affinal relationships, and the term *unga* was most commonly used to refer to feelings between parents and children. Too much love, or *nakli* (also *nagli*) was considered distressing in terms of missing the person when away from her or him,

and one was made very uncomfortable because of this. *Nakli* was associated with a pressing need to protect someone in a nurturing way. *Ungayuq* was not demonstrated very openly in public between adults in a *Qallunaat* sense, but more typically through helping, warm eye contact and smiling, or compliments. Small children are shown the most expressive *ungayuk*. Gratitude (*hatuq*) may be expressed through gifts and very often verbally as “*hatuqnaq!*” (it makes one feel grateful). *Quvia*, or happiness, was associated with being with loved ones or other pleasant experiences, and was usually contrasted with loneliness (*hujjuujaq*) or the highly disapproved of feeling of hostility (*ningaaq* – physical expression of, *urulu* – feeling or verbal expression of, *huaq* – scolding, *qiquq* – to be “clogged up” or almost crying). People who were liked were kind (*quja*), amusing (*tiphi*), and good (*pittau*). Scolding (*huaq*) was seen as inappropriate toward people but useful toward dogs. Anger (*ningaaq* – also meaning physical aggression) was condemned, and when present toward another was viewed as permanent. Annoyance (*urulu*), however, was frequently expressed across many situations.

Briggs was not clear about the difference between anger and annoyance, however adults rarely confronted each other so anger may have been more of an expressive form of this emotion. Jealousy, envy, or greed (*tuhuu*) was sometimes expressed between kin groups but rarely within one. Briggs believed that in spite of within-family denial of *tuhuu*, it was pervasive and often expressed through indirect joking. Humor (*tiphi*) was itself pervasive and open, and laughter was very common. Fear was either *kappia*, of physical injury, or *ilira*, of being treated badly. *Ilira* was very common, mostly in the form of worrying about not wanting to mistreat someone. Briggs found the Inuit of her camp to be very shy and unassertive, generalized this to all Inuit, and contrasted it with

the behaviour of *Qallunaat*. Lonliness or *hujjujaq* was frequently expressed as a passing comment, as a negative feeling of being without loved ones, namely family.

### **The Colonial Impact**

Anthropology has now long studied the process of culture change, typically colonial culture change in continents such as Africa and North America. Both social change, that of materials, structures, or institutions, and cultural change, that of beliefs and behaviours, have been investigated. An earlier focus in the literature, mentioned above, has been on acculturation, defined by De Vos (1976a: 2) as the process of high-speed, conscious and nonconscious, diffusion “of traits from one group to another” in both material and social forms. We have learned that while material features are often quickly adopted by the subordinate society, culture change over time is more complex. De Vos (1976b: 357) added that “the disturbance of identity,” related to an experience of being defeated, has been closely related to “poor” acculturation in colonial contexts while geographic territoriality, the linking of self and place, is often closely related to adaptation or cultural continuity in the context of change. Rather than focusing on mere adjustment or maladjustment to change, or on opportunities formed through cultural diffusion, much research and writing on culture change in the last few decades has emphasized colonial conquest, rule, and power by and of one people over another (Asad 1998; Dirks 1992; Sowell 1998). Power and autonomy can be analytic concepts in the study of changes in affiliation and relatedness, which I attempt to do below and in the next chapter.

For Inuit, kinship has been the social bond. Habermas (1987 [1981] referred to amity, following Fortes (1969), as a metanorm for kinship. More generally, well-being is

strongly based on the maintenance of close and loving interpersonal relationships (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz 1999), especially among Inuit in the family (Kral 2003). The publicly legitimized jural rules of kinship are a cementing force in these relations (Scheffler 2001b). This includes alliance of extended kin (Lévi-Strauss 1969 [1949]). Kinship has been described as having moral obligations, most notably by Fortes (1969). Bloch (1973: 77) stressed the importance of morality in kinship for political and economic organization, and for reinforcing its generality and continuity, writing that kinship is usually “the best type of long-term moral relationship.” Given its norms and rules, Peletz (2001) has described kinship as a moral community with unfulfilled expectations and obligations. Ambivalence is thus included in the process of kin relations, what Trawick (1990: 152) calls “an architecture of conflicting desires.” An examination of changes in kinship, in this case at relatively high speed over a relatively brief period of time, should then be met with conflict in sharp focus. Below I review the literature that has looked at change in Inuit kinship and social organization, especially since the government period following the Second World War. It is my hypothesis that the changes most central to current social distress in Nunavut, those at the base of problems such as the youth suicide epidemic, are those in (1) intergenerational relationships, (2) status/authority pertaining to age, and related to *naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq*, (3) gender roles and identity, particularly among males, and (4) coherence of kinship ties more generally.

## **Contact Then and Now**

Contact with Europeans and their New World progeny is usually seen as the first point of colonial influence for Indigenous peoples. This is not the case with Inuit from what we know. Inuit likely met Norse settlers in the Arctic after AD 1000, and McGee (1990) writes that Inuit may have had a hand in the extinction of Norse colonies in southern Greenland. In 1501 or 1502 three Inuit men were captured on the coast of Labrador and presented as “curiosities” by Sebastian Cabot to the English court (Oswalt 1999). Martin Frobisher sailed to southern Baffin Island in Nunavut in 1576, 1577, and 1578 where he searched for minerals and fought with Inuit, taking some captive while losing men who were described in Inuit oral history three centuries later (Hall 1970 [1876]); Rowley 1993). Visits by Danish-Norwegian and Dutch ships between 1605-1660 resulted in about 30 Inuit being captured, most of them for exhibition in Europe. Inuit captives were occasionally brought to Europe over a period of a few centuries (Idiens 1989; Sturtevant & Quinn 1989). The eighteenth century saw some trade but increasing hostilities between Inuit and European explorers seeking a Northwest passage, minerals, and fur (Williams 2002), Fossett 2001). There was a long-standing tension with the French, who established fur trade posts on the Labrador and Newfoundland coast. French in New France during the eighteenth century took numerous Aboriginal slaves, more than they took African/Black slaves, and this included 18 Inuit who were all held in Quebec City by prominent Frenchmen (Trudel 1994).

More significant contact began with whalers from Scotland and America, and continued up to the second world war with what has been termed the triumvirate or “northern trinity”: the fur trade, missionaries, and the police (Freeman 1971, Wenzel

1991). Whaling started in the Baffin area in 1817 (Eber 1989). Americans and Scots established a whaling station in Cumberland Sound around 1860, and ships increasingly stayed the winter. This lasted into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Inuit would work for the whalers, and many children were born of *Qallunaat* whalers and Inuit women. Inuit moved in large numbers to locate at five whaling stations or overwintering ships, providing food and crew in exchange for food and other material resources (Damas 2002; Trott 2002). Damas (2002: 187) referred to a “technological revolution” that began with Inuit receiving firearms, steel traps, metal tools, and wooden boats from whalers. There was some resulting change in economic alliances among Inuit, for example boat crews going beyond kin to include non-kin (Damas 1972). Graburn (1964) believed that the decline of the caribou population, which had periodic fluctuations, was strongly related to their being driven off by guns. In spite of this new technology, it does not appear that any major economic or cultural changes took place as a result of whaling (Damas 1996).

Then came the trinity. The first missionary in Nunavut, an Anglican, arrived in Cumberland Gulf in 1894. A Catholic missionary made his way to Chesterfield Inlet in 1912, beginning the race for conversion between the two denominations. Many missions were established in the 1920s and 1930s in the midst of widespread and lethal disease epidemics. Conversion was swift (Laugrand 2002). The fur trade of mostly Arctic white fox began in Nunavut under the HBC in 1911 on Baffin Island (in Kimmirut; although in the subarctic as early as 1717 in Fort Churchill), reaching its peak with over 100 posts in 1938 (Crandall 2000; Purich 1992). Another fur trade company out of Paris, Revillon Frères, operated in the Canadian Arctic but was bought out by HBC in 1936 (McCord Museum 2006). The HBC relocated some Inuit in the 1930s to better hunting and

trapping areas, however the government's Policy of Dispersal to prevent aggregation was countered by Christian missions and later reversed by the government in the 1950s. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the third of the trinity, were sent north to maintain Canadian federal law. They had been founded as the North-West Mounted Police in 1873 for the Northwest Territories, and officers were first posted on Herschel Island in 1903 to control whalers (whales were being exterminated in the area) and to collect customs duties from them (Crandall 2000). The first "modern" *Qallunaat* arriving in the Iglulingmiut area of Foxe Basin/North Baffin in 1923 were the police, in this case to Pond Inlet to investigate the alleged murder three years earlier of a *Qallunaat* by an Inuk (Grant 2002). Neither the whalers nor the trinity had a significant effect on the subsistence lifestyle of Inuit. However, by the late 1930s and early 1940s Inuit had become "trapped in the 'credit' system" of outside markets while experiencing the eventual collapse of fox fur trade (Graburn & Strong 1973: 192).

There was also a military presence and a strong cold war influence on Inuit. The US Air Force established a weather station on Pugh Island in Frobisher Bay in 1941, and another station in 1943 at the HBC site at Clyde River. American military forces arrived in very large numbers in Frobisher Bay in 1942-1943, and they began to employ Inuit almost immediately. The US Air Force was a significant presence up to 1963, especially in the settlement of Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit), and by that year there were already 906 Inuit living there (Honigmann & Honigmann 1965). Distant Early Warning (DEW) radar stations were built between 1954-1957 between Alaska and Greenland, totaling 58 within the first two years, as the Cold War air defense covering possible missiles coming down over the north pole. Built by the Western Electric Corporation in the US at the request of



the Secretary of Defense, 460,000 tons of material was sent to the Arctic to build the DEW line as quickly as possible. The project was completed under the belief that, “for all practical purposes... [the lands] are uninhabited,” and the stations were built “in the middle of nowhere.” Inuit employed at these stations were described as initially “baffled” but as “quick to catch on,” and “conscientious and dependable... driving dog teams or bulldozers” (Harris 1958). The final cost of the DEW line was over 2.7 billion dollars (The DEW Line, <http://www.lswilson.ca/dewline.htm>). A number of settlements were built around them. Forced relocation was reported to me by Inuit living at one of these settlements, Broughton Island, now named Qikiqtarjuaq, where three extended families have been at odds with each other since the settlement and DEW line were established. Older Inuit there tell stories of the police shooting their dog teams to get them to move to the DEW site. Other settlements also saw conflict between family groups (Freeman 1971), as most if not all had Inuit from diverse camps (Damas 2002).

The great social transformation took place during the government era after the second world war. Wenzel (n.d., ca. 1980, 2008) describes two *Qallunaat* contact periods in the twentieth century. The first has been known as *contact-traditional*, in which Inuit lifestyle remains largely unchanged and contact is relatively infrequent, limited to the trinity of missionaries, HBC, and RCMP. After 1953, when government responsibility for the land and the Inuit of the north was initiated through the establishment of the Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, the period becomes known as *early-modern* and, we shall see, a truly government era. This department was created to control Inuit and their land by the Canadian government. It is here where we begin our closer examination of the effects of colonial culture change. This change took place in the

context of a horrendous and long-standing tuberculosis epidemic that was at its highest during the 1950s and 1960s. At its peak, the TB rate was recorded among Inuit in 1950 at 718 per 100,000, with 20% of Inuit being infected (Crowe 1991, Grygier 1994).

Hundreds of Inuit were evacuated from settlements and camps and sent to 85 hospitals across Canada, splitting up families who lost many of their members to death and burial in the south (Grygier 1994). It has been estimated that up to 70% of Inuit in some northern areas of Canada, such as the Keewatin Region, were sent south to these hospitals (O'Neil, 1988). Inuit were vulnerable during this time of government taking control. Some have estimated that a majority of Inuit died of epidemic diseases since the time of the whalers over a century ago. Crowe (1991) believes that about two thirds of the Inuit population had already died of such disease by 1900.

Paine (1971) wrote of the government influx into what is now Nunavut after the Second World War as an invasion. With minimal to no ecological adaptation, representatives of the following groups began to arrive: Departments of National Defense (Canadian and American); Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Transport, Fisheries, Agriculture, and Mines; Technical Surveys; Indian and Northern Health Service; Northern Transportation Company; Northern Canada Power Commission; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; DEW line contractors; seasonal contractors; and other servicing companies including airline and air charter companies (mainly for military personnel and transient construction workers). A family allowance program had begun in 1947, replacing the fox fur trade that ended in the 1950s as the primary source of income (Damas 1996). In the new wage economy, high unemployment became a problem with the invention of poverty in Nunavut. Graburn (1964) found that Inuit were

living well below the poverty level, and that poverty was now a new problem for Inuit. In the early 1960s, the primary source of this new income was family allowances and relief payments, what Malaurie (2007: 266) described as “harrowing poverty.”

### **From Camps to Settlements**

Damas (2002) attributes the primary reasons for the development of Inuit settlements to both a settlement policy and the Welfare State Policy, particularly the latter. The high Arctic relocation “experiment” began in 1953 with eastern Hudson Bay (Nunavik) Inuit shipped to Ellesmere Island, and disagreement exists about the alleged forced versus voluntary nature of this relocation (see Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1994; Marcus 1992, 1995; Tester & Kulchyski 1994). Disagreement also exists concerning Inuit consent to being relocated to some settlements, and I suspect that the dialectic proposed by Wenzel (2001) comes into play here. Both sides of these cases are probably true. There is also disagreement about the reasons for government threats of withholding welfare payments to families: to keep populations scattered (perhaps earlier, e.g., Vallee 1967a), or to have parents send their children to the residential and Federal Day schools (e.g., Wachowich, Awa, Katsak & Katsak 2001). Conflicts and contradictions, including about assimilationist versus segregationist schemes, have been common across colonial projects (Thomas 1994).

The most significant force of change in Inuit history was the creation of settlements in the 1950s and 1960s. I will try to show that the dynamics of change in kinship and social organization were far-reaching and likely beyond anything Inuit had ever experienced previously. Whereas periodic aggregation and dispersal are common among hunter-gatherers, and were seasonal among Inuit, the aggregation of large

numbers of Inuit from different kin groups for permanent residence was highly anomalous if not bizarre. The settlements were made up of Inuit from diverse camps and kin groups, a stark contrast to the family-oriented local or band camp lifestyle. Settlements were initially lived in for a part of the year, usually the winter, but eventually grew into year-round permanence (Graburn 1969). Many Inuit initially thought that the move to the settlement would be a temporary one, perhaps in keeping with their seasonal moving cycle (Brody 1991 [1975]). According to Matthiasson (1972), centralization of Inuit between 1963-1973 ended the contact-traditional lifestyle. By 1968, most Inuit lived in the settlements (Barger 1977). The last family in Holman moved from the land to the settlement in 1967 (Condon 1988), and in Igloolik most of the last families moved to the settlement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Only a few year-round outpost camps remained near Igloolik up to the 1990s, while none were left occupied around Pangnirtung and Lake Harbour by 1969 (now Kimmirut) (Graburn 1969).

One Iglulingmiut woman, age 55, told me of being born in a *qarmat* or sod house in a camp between Igloolik and Hall Beach, the closest community to Igloolik about 100km away. She said that her family moved to the Igloolik settlement for supplies. Her mother was hired as a cleaning lady for one of the *Qallunaat* managers, and then started working for the HBC as a cook. “I don’t know whether she got paid for that or not, but I remember as a teen the first time seeing her pay,” she indicated. “It was twenty dollars, and that was for a whole month. And I remember living in a *qarmat* right here in Igloolik.” It was early, in the 1950s, and the HBC and missionaries, Catholic and Anglican, were in Igloolik then. She said that there were about five Inuit families there at the time, many who had been there before any *Qallunaat* had arrived. She added that

many families were coming to the settlement for treatment of chicken pox that was widespread. She thought that this illness was a major reason for Inuit families to move to the settlement. On the land, in the extended family camps, her father was the best hunter, a leader, highly respected. In the settlement he became a garbage man working for the White settlement manager. About this she reported, "My role model. The strongest man in my family becoming a garbage pick-up man is like a slap in the face." As Balikci (1968 [1959]: 161) wrote in 1959 when the government settlements were being established, "Traditionally the headman derived his prestige from his superior hunting and trapping skills and his knowledge of the ecological conditions of the country. In a wage economy he found himself to be just another labourer, and sometimes not the best one." Marie-Lucie Uvuliq, age 56, wanted her name used in my writing because "If I want to help, I have to show who I am" She was born in a camp just off the island of Igloodik. She remembered the HBC and Catholic missionary when her family came to the settlement. One elder woman who thought she might be 100 years old said that her family came to the settlement because of the Catholic priest when she was married, perhaps to get married by him. A 61-year-old Inuk man told me that he arrived in the settlement when he was about 17 years old. He believed that his family moved to Igloodik from the land for the housing, "to get a better house. Warm house. We were told we were going to live in a warm house." He added that the RCMP shot all their dogs once they arrived in the settlement because a woman was bitten by a dog, and the dogs, being loose, were all shot. A number of Inuit said they had moved to the settlement because the government threatened to discontinue their welfare payments if they did not move.

While no law had been practiced among Inuit according to Western standards, van den Steenhoven (1968: 83) found that “maintenance of the peace” was the normative rule. As Inuit elder Kenojuak (2004: 105) reported, “In those days Inuit justice was used solely to maintain the harmony and stability of the group.” Carpenter (1968) reported that this peace was transformed through colonial rule in the settlements. He found a “greater insecurity in interpersonal relations” among Aivilingmiut (of northern Foxe Basin, including Igloodik) and Inuit not feeling as safe during the period of the trinity. This problem concerning safety, he argued, began to shift from a fear of nature to a fear of other people and what he called witch-fear. Carpenter’s use of the word “witch” was more to illustrate what he interpreted as malevolent mistrust rather than the more popular variety of the early New England female spook, however he described cases of women who were feared because of their alleged crossing into a powerfully dangerous spirit world. Problems were increasingly blamed on people rather than on unhappy spirits. Carpenter saw this form of interpersonal fear develop increasingly during the 1930s and 1940s, reaching a crescendo up to about 1953 where “it dominated the thinking and behaviour of every native” (1968: 56). He attributed this largely to acculturation within a context of epidemic diseases that were increasing, together with a decline in game herds and the cross-camp competition for women, food and foxes, the last being a highly uncertain economic product of the fur trade. Carpenter (1968: 56) added: “Where once misfortune was a community problem, it now became a personal one. Instead of community cooperation to appease a deity or drive out a ghost, there was now interpersonal strife.”

Economic inequality became prevalent once the settlements were established because of major discrepancies of income, and cooperation between households declined (Condon 1988). Matthiasson (1972) saw “rejection” of life on the land as one major effect of settlement life. The move to settlement life was one of more disorganization than reorganization, a breakdown of what Damas (1963) referred to as networks of cooperation. According to Willmott (1968 [1960]), the “flexibility” of Inuit social organization referred to earlier was already overly stretched by 1960 because of too many continuing changes. Adams (1972) believed that a major effect of the settlements was a weakening of communication patterns and values. He saw Inuit values as tied to specific situations, and the dramatic change of situations resulted in a loss of normative transactions and social stability. Goldstein (2004) found that many Inuit elders still refer to the land being “warm with illness,” referring to Inuit becoming ill if they live in the same place for too long. Sedentarism in history created a rapid increase in infectious and parasitic disease (Kellehear 2007). Although this may have been true in terms of hygiene in the iglu, tent, or sod house, the elders Goldstein spoke with used the term metaphorically in reference to the settlements, now called communities. Nick Arnatsiaq in Igloodik spoke to me about this concept, which he called *unaksiluarmat* or “getting to hot.” He said it is a “sickness pervading from the earth,” having to do with staying in one place for too long. One Inuk male youth told me that he thought one of the reasons for the suicides was that it was too warm, about illness being caused by staying in one place for too long. Movement has been a natural part of life for hunter-gatherer peoples, and not only for the purpose of procuring new food. As Calloway (2003: 72-73) writes, “People who became farmers may have become less healthy than hunter-gatherers... More

congested and sedentary living patterns may have rendered people more susceptible to bacteria and parasites.” He cites Tessie Naranjo (1995: 247), who has written about the Pueblo people: “Movement is one of the big ideological concepts of Pueblo thought, because it is necessary for the perpetuation of life.” Movement within a *restricted* geographical homeland typifies hunter-gatherer societies, unlike the more “settled” yet highly nomadic and restless agricultural societies; a commitment to place versus profit, according to Brody (2000).

The creation of settlements was a severe displacement of not only the geographic location of Inuit families, but of ancestral ties to place and of the collective names Inuit knew themselves by. Aboriginal sites have traditionally and are increasingly being held as sacred, with writers like Chamberlin (2003) reminding us that sacred sites offer sanctuary. Basso (1996) has most forcefully written about the depth of meaning that place holds for Indigenous peoples. He showed that, among the Western American Apache, even to mispronounce a place-name was and is still interpreted as disrespect for their ancestors who coined these names and passed them down after living them. Place-names are descriptive and contain stories of how to be there, how to live on the land. For Native peoples with oral histories and traditions, Calloway (2003: 7) writes that “[t]he landscape reinforced the continuity and accuracy of the narratives. Storied places pulled the people to them.” For Basso, the sensing of place is a kind of cultural activity that becomes a commonsensical, taken-for-granted “culling of experience” (144). This sensing becomes relational, cognitive, and emotional, and integrated with other forms of cultural life and senses of belonging. Casey (1996) further points out that place embodies culture, in that our bodies are already located on an interpreted ground. Matthiaseen (1976 [1928])



described Inuit of Foxe Basin in 1921-23 as having a remarkably detailed knowledge of the land, both in their travels and in their communication. The same was assessed by Mauss (1979a [1950]: 51-52), who makes the point that Inuit have traditionally had a wealth of geographical knowledge of the land where they live, both men and women, over a very wide area. Charles Francis Hall ((1970 [1876]: 104), who visited Igloolik in 1867 and 1888, wrote “[t]he knowledge that the Esquimaux possess of the geography of their country is truly wonderful. There is not a part of the coast but what they can well delineate, when once it has been visited by them, or information concerning it obtained by others. Their memory is remarkably good, and their intellectual powers, in all relating to their native land, its inhabitants, its coasts, and interior parts, is of a surprisingly high order.”

Inuit have been described as holding geographic or ecocentric identities because of their tie to the land and location (Dorais & Searles 2001, Rasing 1999). Brody (2000) points out that all places have detailed names, which is critical to hunting and life among the Inuit. The *-miut* suffix Inuit use to describe themselves, as a people *of a place*, no longer held its original form in the new settlements. Inuit Elder Barnabas Peryouar ((2004: 121), a Qairnirmiut, has said “The land, rivers, and lakes where people hunted and camped all have names, and people would be called by the name of the land where they were from.” Most of the settlements were given English names like Broughton Island, Frobisher Bay, Eskimo Point, or Hall Beach. Each of these locations had Inuktitut place-names, as did all the land, and these names are currently being re-established. Yet the geographic displacement of Inuit in the transformative creation of settlements and its

effect on sense of place has not yet been examined closely. As we shall see, other forms of identity-change by the government were manifest and likely had a cumulative effect.

The naming of Inuit individuals was also changed by outside forces. Inuit names had already been supplanted or modified with Christian names by missionaries in the 1930s and 1940s when Eskimo serial tag numbers were distributed by the federal government to all Inuit in the 1950s. These tags were designed after military “dog tags” to be worn around the neck, and teachers called Inuit children by these numbers when schooling began (Alia 1994, Crowe 1997). Then Project Surname was instituted, although never legislated, by the Canadian government in 1969, to replace the serial numbers. Such state-mandated legal identities were hoped to replace a system of identity the Canadian government had little understanding of or interest in, using English place-names, serial numbers, and surnames for “maximum synoptic legibility” by the state (Scott, Tehranian, & Mathias 2002: 17). Changing names changes the language of social identification. Alia (2007: 83) writes that “surnaming is sometimes a way of controlling disempowered people.” The Inuit colonial settlement scheme turned out to be as much about transforming social relations among Inuit as it was about identifying and “helping” the new Canadian citizens. New social networks were created through the settlements, which served to reconstitute the relationship between the individual and the collective.

Of particular concern in this dissertation is the effect of settlement life on relationships among Inuit, within families and in dyadic partnerships, hunting relationships, and sexual relations. Vallee (1962: 12) found that Inuit living in the settlements, when compared to those living in camps on the land and living more traditionally, had “rather far-flung networks of friends and relatives, in contrast to the

Nunamiut (Inuit on the land) whose networks are more concentrated and localized in a particular area.” A middle-aged Inuk woman told me that she had just been speaking with her mother, who told her that when they moved to Igloolik “it was like they dropped everything.” She added, “Everything changed. Because the elders were in control before that. Their lifestyle changed dramatically.” Vallee saw a class system developing among settlement Inuit, where inequality regarding resources, including clothing and material goods, and facilities was becoming evident based on income. Prestige appeared to be increasingly associated with what more money could buy, however Vallee acknowledged his difficulty in differentiating between prestige, esteem, and liking. He concluded that the Inuk with the highest ranking in the settlement was one who had the highest income earned as an entrepreneur, or one who owns a boat, and that this rank increases when the Inuk is also regarded by the *Qallunaat* as a spokesperson for Inuit in the settlement. Vallee believed that Inuit in the settlement were ranked on prestige while those on the land were ranked by esteem. He suggested that such within-settlement status was more apparent among extended families whose solidarity was weakest.

Housing began a breakdown of the extended family system due to separate houses for nuclear families (Damas 1996), and the creation of a new social group (Gillespie 2000). This “Americanization of the Arctic” began with the DEW line in the 1950s, which according to Farish (2006) began what he refers to as the start of a dramatic transformation of habitation, material culture, and community structure among Inuit. Kallen (1977) found that housing affected virtually every aspect of Inuit life. The “matchbox houses,” as they were called, were designed for only the nuclear family: parents and their children. Inuit had lived with their extended families, which was no

longer possible. In 1965, 2,600 matchbox houses were built for Inuit (Maurie 2007). One Inuit woman, age 55, complained about her family being split up by the matchbox houses, indicating that visiting and sharing decreased. Western definitions of the family were imposed on Inuit (see Caldwell 2006). The decline in cooperation between households by 1980 was dramatic (Condon 1988). The large population in each settlement affected the vital relationship between parents and their children. Births increased. In addition to the medical reasons for improved survival of newborns and infants, another reason for the increase in births was that more money came from the government with each new child (Graburn 1964). The very large numbers of children saw the development of a children's peer group, between the ages of 8-14, who were under little supervision and getting into trouble in the late 1950s and early 1960s; these children were able to "easily hide or go into another household" and remained difficult to monitor (Graburn 1969: 183). Houses created hiding places for children within the community, and even within the household given the presence of separate rooms with doors. Joseph Auksaq, age 26, spoke about children avoiding their parents by staying in their rooms, their private spaces. "Before we were in settlements we never had walls." Televisions were on much of the time after 1980 (Condon 1988). Graburn (1982:7) called television another "instrument for slow assimilation." By the late 1970s and early 1980s, children were spending much time away from parents and the household, and older teenagers had their own bedrooms and valued their independence from parents (Condon 1988). Television and the new youth culture will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The increasing birth rate together with smaller dwellings created the problem that is very serious today, the problem of overcrowding. Houses in Nunavut hold more than

twice the national average number of occupants, and many are structurally unsound (Dawson 2003). Windows ice up, and walls and floors become warped because of the common cooking method of boiling meat and the constant steam that results. Dawson (2003) points out that Inuit family interaction patterns, visiting, time spent together, and activities engaged in are not the same as in the *Qallunaat* south, yet housing has been designed with southern *Qallunaat* culture in mind. Inuit spatial behaviour has never been considered in housing design, and Dawson finds housing in Nunavut to be culturally incompatible with Inuit life. “[T]he segmentation of open areas into spaces with specific functions such as bedroom, living rooms and kitchens often made it difficult to engage in traditional activities like animal butchering, hide preparation, and the repair and maintenance of hunting equipment. In the 1960s, the use of living room floors for the dressing of game and bathtubs for the storage of meat created unsanitary conditions that placed the health of families at risk (Dawson 2003: 3). Indeed, Mathiassen (1976 [1928]: 130) commented on the hygienic quality of the traditional snow house, and that “[i]ts short lifetime involves that large heaps of refuse and dirt do not get time to accumulate.” In Igloolik, I joined an Inuit family for dinner where the living room was cleared and a semi-butchered seal would be placed in the centre of the room onto cardboard from empty boxes obtained at the Co-op store, and the family would sit on the floor around the seal and share a meal. Inuit typically keep large pieces of meat on cardboard on the floor in the kitchen, to which people can help themselves whenever.

The new housing program had significant economic implications for Inuit. It played a major role in the reordering of time through modernity, according to Frank Tester (2006). Paying for a house was directly associated with having a job, yet jobs were

hard to come by. Tester argues that the new housing assisted in the creation of poverty: “Inuit were defined as poor by housing policy. They were poor because, as a consequence of government policy, they could not afford a house” (Tester 2006: 241). He indicates that in 1963 Inuit in Igloolik rejected a plan to introduce prefabricated houses because the design was, according to them, unsuitable. They wanted to design their own houses. The Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources decided that the Inuit design was too expensive and an agreement was reached for a simpler and cheaper model, however these models never arrived. Tester also writes about the health concerns of putting Inuit into a small, permanent dwelling. Inuit were used to changing tents and igloos for reasons of sanitation, not just related to the seasonal moves. Tester reports that, initially during the deadly TB epidemic, “[h]ousing... gave rise to disease and required medical evacuations” (247).

When government-based settlement began in Igloolik, where Inuit and their predecessors had lived for about four millennia (see McGhee 1996), the population there expanded as it did in the other settlements. By 1960-61 the population was 87, in 1986-87 it was 806, in 1998 it was about 1200, and today it is about 1500 (Damas 2002). Such aggregation of Inuit diminished what Heinrich (1963: 69) called the “dense web of interconnectedness” that made up Inuit kin-based social and economic organization. The local family structure of the camps became settlements of many unrelated Inuit. The structure of normative relationships based on kinship was strained. Camp groups were brought together whose relations had been strained and who were not on speaking terms, which created friction – there being “too many people” (Rasing 1994). New non-kin ties were formed through wage income. Meyers (1986) has written that “creating and

maintaining relatedness demands interaction, reciprocity, and exchange,” and each of these was disrupted for Inuit in their management of new relationships. There was a rapid loss of autonomy of kinship units together with increased involvement in non-kin organizations within the community (Burch 1975). Although kinship was still at the centre of most activities, by 1970 it no longer held the same importance regarding social organization among the Inupiat (Burch 1975). Among the Inupiat, Burch (1975) found the major changes to be (1) changes in kinship membership criteria, content, emotions, and strength of the bond, (2) a simplification of the structure going from local and extended to domestic and nuclear family units, (3) kinship structure changed with the coming and going of its members for reasons that differed from earlier times. He saw these changes to be modeled after *Qallunaat* southern Canadian society.

Kinship is the basic unit for understanding Indigenous peoples, certainly in North America (DeMallie 1998). This kinship extends beyond interpersonal relations to relations with the animals, the land, the weather, the sun, moon and stars, and to subsistence hunting. Inuit life has traditionally been organized around all of these. The woven interconnection among all these elements, forming the core of Inuit society, has been changed dramatically since 1953. Many changes had already occurred through previous outsiders who had a stake in Inuit adapting to their wishes and needs, but the government era was a meta-structural level of change. Roles, responsibilities, and place were changed. This was in the context of the aggregation of many families into permanent settlements with small houses and a new social organization run by *Qallunaat* government Northern Service Officers in each settlement, the creation of a new world order for Inuit. The next chapter will look into some of the interwoven elements of Inuit

life after the settlement of Igloolik began in the 1950s but primarily the 1960s. Inuit narratives of changes in kin and community alliance will help in the understanding of social perturbation in Nunavut today.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Colonial Impact on *Turtularsiq*/Relatedness

In this chapter are covered a number of changes in Inuit society over the past half-century. These changes are all related to *turtularsiq*, which translates as “how we address each other” or relatedness in Inuit society. The separation of the topics as chapter headings is somewhat artificial, as they are all highly inter-related. Looking at each, however, will illuminate the need for more focused attention and study in these areas. It is the thesis of this study that the effects of colonialism are seen most vividly in relationships, and that these changes among Inuit are behind their current social problems including suicide. The complexity of suicide cannot be attributed to any single cause, even to colonial relational change. The psychological pain behind suicide and other social problems, however, can be better understood through the people’s stories and lives. It is this perturbation that must be examined, which is independent of suicide and only related to suicide through lethality, the idea of suicide as a cultural model or idiom of response to suffering. This topic will be explored in Appendix I. Here we will examine some of the elements of recent colonial change and social perturbation among Inuit.

#### **Inuit-*Qallunaat* relations**

Similar to and perhaps as a continuation of earlier Inuit-*Qallunaat* trade relations, these relations have been mixed and continue to be so. Of note is *Qallunaat* power and authority especially in the early to middle part of the government era, and its effects on Inuit social structure and social relations. Inuit-*Qallunaat* relations set the stage for

changes in many areas of Inuit life. I will highlight some of the more negative aspects, ones that depict the colonial agenda at the site of Inuit life in Nunavut.

Balikci (1968 [1959]) described the development of an Eskimo Community Advisory Council in 1955 in the new settlement of Great Whale River. It was established by a Northern Service Officer, the *Qallunaat* government representative in charge of settlements. Balikci shows how this Advisory Council did not work, primarily because its tasks were of little interest to Inuit and it had an authority structure foreign to Inuit. Balikci argued that the Council was not compatible with Inuit kinship-based social organization. The relations between Inuit headmen on the Council were loose, and the new rules were restricting. Status or *naalaqtuq* in the Council should have been associated with existing *naalaqtuq* based on hunting and trapping skills, and unrelated kin groups were unevenly represented in the Council. The structural mismatch between it and Inuit led to its being disbanded. Balikci saw things getting worse as *naalaqtuq* or authority/respect was being increasingly shaped by the individual debt system in the settlement, one that was based on material/financial wealth. In keeping with his time of the late 1950s, Balikci nevertheless recommended that *Qallunaat* organize and supervise Inuit in the management of their settlement, which was done through these Northern Service Officers.

The Quebec government established in 1959 a program of Co-operatives, stores that would be run by Inuit in the settlements as an incentive toward economic independence. Vallee (1964) indicated that these Co-ops were dependent on government funding and other support services. It was understood that *Qallunaat* were in charge of how things took shape in the settlements, however this was a move for Inuit to become

more autonomous from the constant supervision by *Qallunaat*. Although Vallee indicated that Inuit-*Qallunaat* relationships were viewed as “equal” in the Co-op, this equality was false as he added that technical assistance and supervision were “concealed behind the scenes in order to foster the impression that people are pulling themselves up by their own *kamik* [boot] straps.” Co-op stores today are largely still run by *Qallunaat*.

Inuit-*Qallunaat* relations were hardly equal. There is a long history of Inuit being viewed and treated as children by *Qallunaat* in the north (Paine 1971). This has been the case for colonizers’ attitudes toward Indigenous peoples for centuries. A reciprocal yet unbalanced relationship took place between the patron or *Qallunaat* “middle-man” and the client, the Inuit (Paine 1977a). Vallee (1964, 1967a) indicates that the use of the terms “Mr.” and “Mrs.” by Inuit toward *Qallunaat* was a means of showing deference, while *Qallunaat* called Inuit by their names. An Inuit-*Qallunaat naalaqtuq* (respect-obedience) without *ungayuq* (affection-closeness) was apparent, independent of kin or age status. Where was the *ungayuq* affection-closeness? Brody (1991 [1975]) documented negative attitudes toward the Inuit that were prevalent among the trinity, to whom the Inuit became quite dependent by 1950. Many of these attitudes continued with the *Qallunaat* who were arriving in Nunavut during the government era. I heard Inuit described as “children” by NWT *Qallunaat* government officials in Iqaluit in 1998, in personal conversations, a year before the new Nunavut government was established. Vallee (1967a: 210) learned from the *Qallunaat* in the settlement that while they romanticized traditional Inuit life, they held “contempt for the living Eskimos they meet either openly or by implication.” Paine (1977b) referred to the Co-op as a form of *Qallunaat* tutelage of Inuit, and replaced the term tutor with “nanny” to better describe *Qallunaat*-Inuit

relations. “White tutelage is not flexible,” wrote Paine (1977c: 93), “either in precept or practice – and repeatedly disregards the values Inuit place on deference and personal autonomy. Rather, white tutelage is a white confrontation to which Inuit respond well only in the sense that their own culture teaches them to avoid confrontations whenever possible. Affronted, they withdraw.”

Brody (2000) discusses the vocabulary of fear in Inuktitut. Similar to that outlined by Briggs (1968), Brody refers to *kappia* as a fear of danger and adds the root word *irksi* for terror, noting that polar bears can be described as terrifying or *irsina-*. The more interesting term is *ilira-*, which refers to interpersonal relations. Briggs had it as a fear of treating someone badly, typically used in the form of not wanting to mistreat someone else or a fear of being treated badly. It is thus interactional, including the avoidance of causing someone to have *ilira* of oneself. Brody refers to *ilira* as “the mix of apprehension and fear that causes the suppression of opinion and voice” (57). He found that, in the early 1970s, *ilira-* was used to describe Inuit relations with *Qallunaat* and indeed was their rationale for obeying these bossy people from the south, often against their own values. As one Inuit elder and teacher told Brody, *Qallunaat* caused *ilira* among the Inuit: *iliranalaurtut*. The elder said that *ilira* can be caused by such things as ghosts and unreasonable, authoritarian, and mean people like the *Qallunaat*. Brody (2000: 41-42) writes that “*Ilira* is a word that speaks to the subtle but pervasive results of inequality. Through the inequality it reveals, the word shapes the whole tenor of interpersonal behavior, creating many forms of misunderstanding, mistrust, and bad faith... The power of colonial masters is indeed like ghosts – appearing from nowhere, seemingly supernatural and nonnegotiable.” Remie (1994: 109) described a term used by

his informants during fieldwork in the central Arctic in the early 1970s, *Qallunaat iliranartut*, meaning “White men are fearsome, White men make you feel frightened, White men are awe-inspiring, White men make you take heed.” Brody indicates that Inuit invented words in Inuktitut to accompany their subservience, including “thank you” (e.g., *qujanamiik*; *quja* means “kind”) that had been previously unnecessary. The word *qujana* was used in Igloolik in 1822, described by Parry (1969 [1824]), however Inuit used it when giving something to *Qallunaat* and not when receiving anything. This new form of status relationship goes to the heart of the transformation of *naalaqtuq* or respect among Inuit, where this relational term lost its partner *ungayuq* or closeness and formed a new coalition with *ilira*.

Vallee (1964: 48) compared settlements of Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove in 1959-1960, and found the large number of *Qallunaat* in Rankin (then a mining settlement) having an effect on Inuit. “Too may Kabloona bosses at Rankin Inlet,” reported one Inuk. Another said that with so many *Qallunaat* the Inuit “feel like dogs who can’t go into the tent.” Another Inuk said that Inuit especially liked the *Qallunaat* “when there are only a few and when they are only visiting.” Most of the complaints had to do with *Qallunaat* “bossiness.” Here we see *naalaqtuq* again without *ungayuq*, which Brody (1991 [1975]) has referred to as a form of the serfdom also suggested by Wenzel later in this chapter. Traditionally, Inuit had a different kind of boss. As Inuit historian Kananginak Pootoogook observed, “There were bosses way before the white man ever came, but they did not rule or enforce rules. They were chosen because their skills enhanced the community’s chances of survival. The best hunter in a camp would automatically be boss

because he was the main support” (Fossett 2001: 208). The leader had collective rather than individual responsibilities.

Many have written that Inuit and *Qallunaat* have had vastly different ways of dealing with conflict, and with dealing with people in general. Lange (1977) described Inuit flexibility as being tolerant of different views, of being open-minded, and thought that this might help explain why Inuit were “taken over” by *Qallunaat* in the settlements. Maxwell (1986) found that Inuit believed all *Qallunaat* were wealthy and should share this wealth with them. He also found that Inuit held *Qallunaat* responsible for Inuit abuse of drugs and alcohol, but notes that their attitude toward *Qallunaat* was ambivalent and related to *ilira* or a fear of offending or being offended. Inuit living in the camps began to hold some resentment toward Inuit in the settlements because the latter had more material wealth (Vallee 1967a). In the early to mid-1970s, the Inuit agencies in the settlements were said to be competitive with each other, presumably for resources and possibly *Qallunaat* approval. Inuit and *Qallunaat* have never mixed socially in the settlements, and this is still true today. In the early 1970s, for example, *Qallunaat* house water tanks were filled on a regular basis while Inuit had to cut ice blocks to fill theirs (Kallen 1977). This inequality became especially apparent regarding material resources. It is here that the terms *Nunamiut* and *Kabloonamiut* were born. Inuit living on the land more traditionally became known among themselves as *Nunamiut*, while those in the settlements were called *Kabloonamiut* (Vallee 1967a, 1968 [1962]). Kallen (1977) found that most Inuit belonged at some level to both groups, however the two worlds were vastly different from each other.

Older Inuit are likely to attribute many social changes to *Qallunaat*. Elder Noah Piugaatuk spoke in 1986 about how *Qallunaat* material resources were affecting Inuit marriage (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-007). “That is why there are a lot of single Inuit around, because they are getting the support of the *Qallunaat*. If it was in the past and they were trying to survive by themselves, then people would have to get married to have that support of another person. It is because Inuit are getting a lot of support from the outside that there are many single Inuit around.” Interviewed in Inuktitut by George Qulaut who asked him if Inuit were living like dogs now, Noah responded in the affirmative with “*Eiitiaq! Eii*, that is the case.” Elder Rosie Iqaliijuq, age 83, also indicated in 1987 that men were no longer marrying very young girls. Due to *Qallunaat*, “there was no disobedience and the matter was settled.” When she was informed that this was illegal and whether Inuit could do anything about it, she responded, “I don’t know, I am not able to elaborate on that as Inuit are too influenced by the *Qallunaat*.” (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-032). Another elder, Joe Tasuiq Haulii, spoke in 1990 about young women changing,

My mother told me a bit about the ways to behave when a man had taken a wife for the first time. When husband and wife are first together and the man had to do his best to get a wife in such a manner and be extremely passionate to get one. But now a days young men get a girl and quite soon after they drop her and get another one. The young girls are too bold today and they throw themselves to the boys. The young girls know a lot more about the *Qallunaat* and usually are more attached to them. They know the ways of the *Qallunaat* a lot more than before and they are getting separated a lot easier than before. I

feel that the young women now a days are prone to mimic the ways of *Qallunaat* even more. My mother used to tell me that some separations before were committed due to a woman's manipulative ways of talking about certain people. Nowadays the young girls are being educated by the *Qallunaat* and are prone to become influenced easier and are acting more like them. They get separated a lot more and the same goes with the young boys. The older people who are older than me had been brought up in a more civilized way, I would like... the older people who are older than me... to advise the younger generation and voice it more to them (Igloolik Oral History Project IE-120).

O'Neil (1983) discussed the particular group of *Qallunaat* and their own subculture that came to work in the settlements, who were there during his fieldwork in 1977-78 and 1981-82. He referred to them as "White hippies" with antiestablishment attitudes (187). These teachers, nurses, administrators, and carpenters were on a frontier where O'Neil found them wanting to "protect" Inuit from their own drinking, drug use, and extramarital sexuality while they themselves acted in these ways. Yet Inuit youth knew all about the behaviour of these *Qallunaat* and were apparently offended by *Qallunaat* hypocrisy.

The relations between Inuit and *Qallunaat* were thus mixed. Yet *Qallunaat* were experienced as foreign in their ideas and practices. Dependencies were created in forms such as debt, boss-worker relationships, being confronted by tutelage relationships (Paine 1977c), being treated as inferior, and the evocation of the emotion *ilira*. A new social world was created in the settlement that in turn created new relationships among Inuit. There was an increasing loss of autonomy among Inuit in the settlement, as they were



seen by *Qallunaat* as “cultural works in progress” leading toward assimilation (Coates 2004). Inuit lives were transformed, and there emerged a loss of confidence in their sense of surviving on their own resources and even in their child-rearing (Brody 2000). Brody (2000) notes that Inuit and other hunter-gatherers have been oriented to their relations to the world, from animals to the land, while *Qallunaat*, representing agrarian society, have been oriented to their relations to control and their ability to shape and change the world.

### **Christianity**

Brody (2000: 242) has referred to missionaries among hunter-gatherers as “the advance guard and companions of colonial processes,” representing both God and the powerful White state. Christian conversion among Inuit, what Peterson (1995: 122) has called “mental colonialism,” had the effect of not only sending the shaman underground (e.g., Remie 1983), but within and across the settlements of causing a division between Anglican and Catholic Inuit. Shamanism was already on the decline by the 1920s among the Netsilik Inuit on the west coast of Hudson Bay (Rasmussen 1931). The first Christian missionary came to the Iglulingmiut in 1931, who found that Inuit there were already familiar with some hymns from an Inuk Christian prophet named Uming or Umik from Pond Inlet to the north where bibles first arrived in 1919 (Laugrand 2002, Mathiassen 1976 [1928]). Igloodik elder Rosie Iqallijuq reported that Umik was preaching Christianity in Igloodik in the 1920s, and that he was also a shaman or *angakkuq*; shamanic and Christian ideas and practices were mixed by Inuit who were far from missionary posts (Laugrand, Remie, & Oosten 2008). Although Christian conversion took place before the government era, the denominational split between Catholics and

Anglicans is one form of social disconnect that has had a lasting impact. There was much decades-long competition and even hostility between Anglican and Catholic missionaries in Nunavut (Trott, 1997, 1998), causing denominational strife among Inuit and even within extended families. This was apparent in Igloolik, one of the settlements having both missions established. Inuit in that community became divided, which extended to meat-sharing, betrothal, and socialization patterns. This splitting up of kin groups had begun even earlier between those who were and were not converted, whereby some converted Inuit would avoid their heathen kin (Rasing 1994). The Anglican mission was established in Igloolik in 1950, the year Inuit were first allowed to vote in the federal election. The denominational split in the community has continued. Inuit adults there have told me that as children they used to throw rocks at each other across the water pipe that divides the Anglican and Catholic sides of the community, and sometimes get into fights. Other settlements including Kapuivik experienced a similar division of Inuit based on the two denominations, and most had separate Catholic and Anglican sub-villages (Damas 1963). This split had a strong effect on endogamy and still does. In 1998 a suicide took place in Igloolik of a young man whose girlfriend's father forbade her to see him because he was of the other religion. The young man was distraught and did what has become common among youth with troubled romantic relationships. The religious divide is today less pronounced but still exists in Igloolik.

Many elders have told of the conversion to Christianity, called *siqitittut* in Inuktitut, from their childhood. *Siqqitiq* was an Inuit ritual where a seal heart would be eaten, a former taboo, showing their new Christian freedom (Laugrand, Remie & Oosten 2008). Almost all elders interviewed over the last 20 years have always been Christian,

given that the missionaries were in Igloolik between the 1920s-1940s. Interviewed in 1992, Elder Hubert Amarualik spoke about how his parents and grandparents were once of the “old belief.” He indicated that his parents were grateful that they no longer had to live by the taboos or *pijjusi* of the old day, which many elders refer to in the Igloolik Oral History Project. “Everything in the taboo system was met with anxiety, they were afraid they might be met with dire consequences should a taboo be breached. With the introduction of Christianity I used to notice that my parents were so pleased and filled with gratitude that they were no longer bound by the taboo.” He remembered his parents and grandparents confessing to the missionary their old beliefs, known as *ukpililaurqaartinnagit* or “before they were believers” or “relinquishing the old belief,” which were seen as sins committed (Igloolik Oral History Project IE-214). Elder Rachel Uyarasuk, interviewed in 1990, never knew anything about the “traditional beliefs,” and only began learning about them after marriage, saying that her parents “would lecture about the need to forget about the old beliefs” (Igloolik Oral History Project IE-106). The shaking of hands greeting started among Inuit with Christianity, as a way of acknowledging mutual belief, often together with a white flag (Mathiassen 1976 [1928]: 235). Elder Aipilik Inuksuk, interviewed in 1986, recalled Inuit first shaking hands during church service after a hymn had been sung (Igloolik Oral History Project IE-004).

The meaning of Christianity among Inuit is not well understood and would require a separate thesis. Recent scholarship on this subject is appearing (Laugrand 2002, Laugrand, Oosten & Kakkik 2003). Not all of the older spiritual beliefs are gone, and many are merged with Christianity. The alter in the church in Qikiqtaruaq, where I attended the funeral of a suicide, was draped with sealskin and Inuit carvings were on it.

Many Inuit still speak of seeing strange beings on the land, and this concept appears to be well known and accepted by a great many Inuit. These beings are called *nunamiutait* or spirits of the land (Bennet & Rowley 2004). One Inuit friend in his early 30s spoke about a creature in the sea seen by a few youth during the summer, one who “adopts” humans and put them on its back and takes them away, that can turn into an animal at any time especially if someone shoots it. His great-grandmother had first told him about these beings. An older carver who was teaching me Inuktitut told me of his being born on a small island next to Igloolik, Qikiqtarjuk, and that his elders had told him that when he finds very old small artifacts on the ground to spit on them and leave them for a day or more before returning to pick them up, otherwise “the spirits will go after you.” He spoke of the land having many spirits. Another Inuk male talked about his uncle seeing little people or *inugagulligaarjuk* (*inu* is person, *aggur* is the direction of the wind, and *igartuq* is leaning the body against). These small beings are supposed to be strong and aggressive, and are said by elders to be able to grow to the height of a man and be able to kill someone. Bennet and Rowley (2004) add that this creature is said to have lived near the shore. One older Inuk whom I befriended, one of the community’s best carvers and a member of the evangelical church who likes to speak of the bible, told me about strange beings he learned about from his elders. The *Iyerak* are people who can shape shift into caribou and other animals or even into a dead relative. They get close enough to hit you on the head and knock you out, and two of them take you by your arms into their world that is very different from this one. Then they bring you back and you cannot remember anything except being hit on the head. After a few years some memories of the capture return. Another being is the *tagriaksuq*, who he said was “like a shadow,” a dog team that

appears in a distance and keep getting closer. Sometimes you can hear the whip and the dogs, and the dog team goes behind some ice and never reappears. He said that he has seen this during a full moon. He finally talked about *ingruyaq*, a ball of light sometimes seen on the land at night that “bounces” off the land a few times before disappearing into the ground. He has also seen this. He added that these are old stories and “may sound crazy to a scientist,” but that they have taken place. I was once on the land after walking for many hours and saw in the distance a snowmobile towing a sled that went behind some raised ice and never came out the other side. I thought it strange but did not make much of it, yet when I told this to an elder woman she also told me about *tagraiksuq* and said that they are now sometimes snowmobiles rather than dog teams. She went on to tell me about seeing the same thing.

It was not until I had spent about four or five months in the field in Igloolik that a few Inuit I came to know well told me about shamanism in their families. It is interesting that each of these Inuit was a leader in the community, highly respected, and all were involved in helping the community in significant ways. Most had no political involvement, but two were helping run the Hamlet Council. I approached these individuals because I saw in them a particular ability to have insight into and help others. When speaking with each of them, I asked about their intuitions and abilities to see more than the average Inuk in the community. Each of them, reluctantly, told me that they thought they had some special gifts, perhaps powers, that they tried to keep at bay. They did not speak with anyone about this, and they had not spoken with each other either. Yet their stories were remarkably similar. Each of them spoke of not wanting to call on the spirits to give them any powers, because today there was nothing to be done with them.

They had experienced being pulled in that direction, and each of them resisted. Laugrand, Remie and Oosten (2008: 182), who have studied Inuit shamanism in Nunavut for years, found that elders report they believe shamans still exist in the communities, and that the animal helping spirits or *tuurngait* “are still around, and they may approach you when they want you to become an *angakkuq*.” These authors describe an Inuk man to whom this was happening and who was resisting, whose mother told him that he should resist and that he was being called by her shaman uncle’s *turngaq*. One of the Inuit in Igloolik who had this experience smiled and called me a shaman once because of my work with the youth there, and I was honoured. Filmmaker Zach Kunuk told me that Igloolik should establish what he called a “shaman church,” and he has included shamanism in his films. Shamanism still appears to be a taboo topic, yet Inuit carvings are increasingly representing shamans. It is becoming a more popular topic among younger Inuit (Laugrand 2002). Beyond these conversations, I never heard shamanism mentioned other than by the filmmakers at Isuma, the Igloolik film company, who were depicting a shaman in a film they were shooting at the time.

In summary, the Christian missionaries were Brody’s (2000) “advance guard” to the government era that began in the 1950s. They brought change in Inuit relationships across a number of dimensions, from sexuality and the subordination of spouse exchange and polygamy/polyandry, to the subordination of the shaman from whom Inuit sought healing and help with problems in hunting or physical well-being. Missionaries were against shamanism and even the traditional tatoos on women, which stopped some time in the 1940s (Maurie 2007). Families became either Catholic or Anglican, and problems of competition and hostility emerged from this denominational splitting. The lifting of

taboos allowed for changes in practices and behaviours. Inuit remained living in their family camps and hunting, however new moral rules and taboos were introduced.

Christian conversion among Indigenous peoples of the New World was not unilateral, however, but “reciprocal albeit asymmetrical... Christian concepts were generally accepted only in so far as they could be molded to fit indigenous ones” (Griffiths 1999: 1, 11). It has ranged across individuals from superficial to authentic, but has usually been a melding with their traditional spiritual beliefs, a syncretism or religious hybridity (Axtell 1988, Trigger 1985). Griffiths (1999) finds that synchronism suggests an end-point and that Indigenous Christian conversion is both a blending and a moving. This can be seen in Igloolik as some Inuit join a growing born-again denomination while a trend continues, especially among younger Inuit, toward an interest in shamanism of Christianity. Griffiths, like others, also points to motivations for conversion including economic and political. The cultural history of a particular group also comes into play, and it may be that the epidemic diseases, some brought by the missionaries, created a bad omen and helped open the door for the new shamanism. Others argue that conversion was part of a contagion of ideas, similar to the way cultural diffusion works more generally (Laugrand 2002, see Sperber 1996). Like colonialism, conversion needs to be understood in local and particular contexts of time and place. Robbins (2004) argues that such conversion has taken different forms at different times for a particular group, combining both utilitarian or material/power/prestige and intellectual or meaning-focused approaches, often in that order, where Christianity is melded with newer sets of cultural understandings. It took on different shapes among different Inuit groups, the understanding of which continued scholarship will develop.

### ***Naalaqtuq/Ungayuq: Respect-Obedience and Affection-Closeness***

Damas (1963) identified two behavioural dyads that form the core of Inuit relatedness, *naalaqtuq* or respect-obedience and *ungajuk* or affection-closeness. The use of these terms was common, according to Damas (1968a), making relationships among Inuit more understandable. He saw *ungayuq* as a marker of the “degrees of closeness in their cooperative bonds,” especially among cousins (1968a: 88). Wenzel (2004, personal communication) has described *ungayuq* and *naalaqtuq* as “complementary structuring complexes... that have to work together. If all that binds a dyadic pair is *naalaqtuq*, it would be the equivalent of serfdom; likewise, if only *ungayuq*, life would be too loose. *Naalaqtuq* is the ‘stuffness,’ while *ungayuq* is the ‘flex’.” *Naalaqtuq* works through benevolent cooperation. Stevenson (1997) has noted the importance of status relationships within Inuit kinship based on both *ungayuq* and *naalaqtuq*. Status or authority was generally determined by age, which was highly important. Damas (1963) noted that while he was in Igloolik in 1960-1961, Inuit were continually asking about one’s age to see where the person fit in the hierarchy of authority. Age and sex determined authority among siblings, with higher status among older males. *Naalaqtuq* was important for inter-generational relations. Damas (1963: 172) wrote that “acculturative influences interfere with the operation or formation of native-centred authority patterns,” or *naalaqtuq*. Brody (1991 [1975]: 159) also found that settlement life “disrupted the old basis of authority and respect.” A new form of leadership, for example, was the whaleboat captain (*umialiq*), often but not always the older male family head who would otherwise have high status. Inuit government representatives in each



settlement also had a new status, and they were not always the headmen of the camps. Inuit autonomy and status were dramatically changed within one generation in the move from camps to settlements. A few older Inuit told me that Inuit who ran for elections for the Hamlet Council were often not seen as leaders, and those who were traditional leaders or *isumatuq* would usually stay away from electoral politics. Kallen (1977) saw the primary causes of what she called community fragmentation as *Qallunaat* domination over Inuit and inter-agency power struggles with the settlements. Desgoffe (1955) reported less cooperation and the establishment of new social hierarchies among the Inuit because of HBC and government intervention, what he called a splintering (*l'éclatement*) of traditional camp organization among Inuit in the settlements.

Changes in status differentiation or authority, *naalaqtuq*, as a result of *Qallunaat* in the government era was investigated by Vallee (1968 [1962]), primarily in the Baker Lake area of Nunavut. *Naalaqtuq* was traditionally associated with being older, male, skilled (e.g., hunting), leading the camp and/or household, and having a relationship with supernatural beings in the role of *angakoq* or shaman. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, major changes in *naalaqtuq* were beginning to take place. The changes were paralleling hierarchies of *naalaqtuq* in *Qallunaat* society. Furthermore, the “Kabloonamiut,” a spatial referent for Inuit living on the settlements, were subordinate to the *Qallunaat*, and “Nunamiut” on the land were becoming subordinate to Kabloonamiut. The highest-ranking Inuit were becoming those with the highest income, as were Inuit spokespersons to *Qallunaat* for the group. Socioeconomic levels were differentiating Inuit in the settlements, and were even incorporated into the language with the *-miut* suffix related to material wealth. The systems of ranking or *naalaqtuq* became different between the camp

and the settlement. Vallee believed that this new “settlement *naalaqtuq*” contributed significantly to the diminishing autonomy of the local or extended family group.

Criteria for prestige changed with settlement life, especially for men working in the settlements (Barger 1977). Good hunters in hunting-trapping societies have higher status (Kelly 1995). Balikci (1959) saw the authority of the camp headman and prestige associated with the best hunters and trappers decline, being replaced by Inuit with more money and material goods. He found that “[t]he recent unequal distribution of wealth produced new jealousies and tensions between individuals, headmen, and different occupational groups. This reduced the possibility of inter-individual and inter-group collaboration in the Council and in the community.” Jealousy was seen in “striving for prestige” and caused the splitting of groups in some settlements (Damas 1963). This may be one form of the new material competition introduced by the outsiders, and a new meaning of *nataqtuq* was beginning to take place. It is the typical degradation and change of status and autonomy that Mannoni (1964) wrote about concerning colonialism of Indigenous peoples.

*Naalaqtuq* traditionally has had much to do with age status. Vallee (1967a) did not see a decrease in parental authority in the Baker Lake region of Keewatin in 1959-1960, but he predicted that this would take place as numbers of Inuit in each settlement increased. This is indeed what happened. By the mid-1970s, newly married couples were living on their own rather than with one of the set of parents as before, which Brantenberg (1977) pointed out caused status ambiguity among household members. The *naalaqtuq* relationship with parents, especially with the same-sex parent, was no longer applicable within the couple’s household. This appears to have also been extended to

forms of address. Wenzel (2004, personal communication) found that the use of kin terms as forms of address began to decrease in the 1980s among Clyde River Inuit. He noted that the use of kin terms is related to *naalaqtuq* or respect, for example calling one's parent *anana* or *atata* (mother or father) rather than by their Christian first name. Brantenberg (1977) also indicated that the rules became ambiguous around what constituted public and private spaces and resources, as the concept of privacy was now taking hold in the settlements. It is interesting to note that the *naalaqtuq* relationship was more traditional when Inuit from the settlements were on the land. In the late 1970s-early 1980s, O'Neil (1983) found *naalaqtuq* to be strongly maintained according to age and kin role when Inuit were on the land. Here we see another form of Wenzel's dialectic, as both change and continuity in a cultural pattern that, in this case, is geographically contextualized and differentiated.

Leah Otak, age 55, talked about *naalaqtuq* changing with parenting:

*Naalaqtuq* is, we had to obey our parents. We had to do what they tell us. That was *naalaqtuq* to your parents, to teach you how to live. If you're trying to live the way you're taught, you're going to do well. But if you get away and did not listen to what your parents tell you, then things would start to fall apart. Because they've given you instructions. They know what was good for you. And you didn't follow them, so that's the reason things are falling apart. Even now I see young mothers, or any mothers, telling their little kids if there was something within reach for a child, that the child should not take, the mother will be saying, "Oh, don't do that." And is a little baby really wants to take that, or a little child, and at the end they let them take it. That's a big stuck that they're giving the child.

Because they are teaching them not to listen. When you tell the child not to get into that, you stay with them, and you take them, and you explain further. You make sure that they don't do it. Because next time you tell them not to do that, all they need to do is to scream and they'll get it. They get used to that, and they lead them the wrong way.

She also described how *naalaqtuq* was mixed up with *ilira*, the type of worry associated with mistreatment. Inuit men brought home the relationships they had with their *Qallunaat* bosses. The word “boss” is mixed with negativity from the *Qallunaat* bosses since the settlement days. One young man spoke about his anger toward his uncle, who he described as being a “boss” because he did not take this young man’s opinions seriously.

Some people were changed because their *Qallunaat* bosses told them what to do. And they learned to do that with their jobs, remember that man who was saying he learned to shoot the dogs? Without the wishes of the owner of the dogs? He does that, and maybe he did more things. Everything had new influence on people. New things had new influence on people and their behaviours. Some people would just imitate bosses. And people generally got changed.

Yet traditional forms of *naalaqtuq* are still very strong in many Inuit families. Joachim Alaralak, a man in his late 40s, was raised in the traditional way on the land by his father. He never attended high school and instead learned to be an excellent hunter. He has lived in Igloolik all his life, and has never had a telephone because he said he believes in visiting. When asked about *naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq*, he expressed that they

belong together. “I *unga* them,” he indicated, “means I love and respect them.” He said that *naalaqtuq* has two meanings: trying to understand someone, and, when on the land, doing what you are told to do. When I asked him whether *ilira* has become part of *ungayuq* in some relationships, he thought about this for a while and replied yes. He then talked about *ilira*. *Illirayuqtuq* means being scared or shy of someone. *Illiraqtuq* means doing something without anyone knowing or seeing you. I asked him if this was traditional Inuit behaviour, and he replied that it was what *Qallunaat* did and introduced to Inuit.

I spoke about this with Leoni Qrunnut, a respected elder. She and her husband Anthony worked together as traditional counselors in the Social Services building, and in 1998 helped tailor the Unikkartuit project to the community (Kral 2003). Leoni said that *naalaqtuq* has remained much the same within families for children who still respect both adults and their older siblings. She said that with the older youth, teenagers and those in their early twenties, this was another matter but she would not elaborate. One morning I observed outside a house near my bunkhouse an older man sitting on his snowmobile and a young boy of about 12-14 years of age pulling the cord to start the machine. The boy pulled three times and started the engine, and the older man drove away. The boy walked up the stairs of the house and stood for a while watching as the older man drove away. This was a sign of respect for an elder by a child, *naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq* working together.

As Brody (2000) has argued, remove respect from its traditional form among hunter-gatherers and everything will go wrong. It will be seen in a later section of this chapter that respect and communication has also changed for parenting and parent-child

relations, with serious consequences. Inuit I spoke with about changes in *naalaqtuq* and *ungayyuq* attributed these changes primarily to *Qallunaat* influence. The Northern Services Officers and other *Qallunaat* in the settlements thus introduced new forms of hierarchy and subordination, especially the role of the “boss.” Power in relationships was reordered and its meaning was changed. *Ungayyuq* or the affection-closeness tie with *naalaqtuq* was often taken away and replaced with *ilira*, a type of fear. Inuit at times brought their new relationships with *Qallunaat* bosses to their families. Status relationships changed in the settlements, whereby high status had been with the best hunter, and among Iglulingmiut, the oldest male member of the extended family referred to as the *isumatuq* or wise one (Damas 1968b). In the settlement status became associated with having a job, money, and living like a *Qallunaat*. It must be stated, however, that large differences exist among Inuit families for the continuity of traditional *naalaqtuq-ungayyuq*. While some families experience extremely difficult relationships across generations, others have maintained much of this traditional relational bond. Many Inuit are trying to revive the traditional pairing of *naalaqtuq* and *ungayyuq*. Again, it is common knowledge among Inuit that the traditional relationships among family members are more evident when they are on the land together, for example camping. They are happier on the land and for some families being on the land is healing. Yet respect across age and gender has changed, especially for today’s Inuit youth. Brody’s prediction has materialized, and much has now gone wrong.

## Hunting and Sharing

Sahlins (1972) proposed that hunter-gatherers live in what he called the original affluent society, what he called “affluence without abundance” in a Zen-like economy where material goods are adequate and satisfying, and where life is good (Sahlins 1968: 86). He tried to show that hunters are doing more than merely surviving, and that they are for the most part living quite well. Some have critiqued Sahlins’ view, such as Kelly (1995) who argued that hunter-gatherers have wide variability across peoples in the degree to which they “work,” and that hunger, violence, and inequality have been common among them. These qualities are unfortunately pervasive in all societies. Nevertheless, Inuit have for the last millennium lived on the land and subsistence hunting has been a core of their social organization and livelihood. Pelly (2001) describes hunting among Inuit as sacred, from the boy becoming a man after his first hunt to the sharing of meat in the extended family an important form of *ungayuq* and *naalaqtuq*. Everyone was involved in the hunt, from making boots and clothing to feeding the dogs to hunting alliances on the land to the cutting the seal meat. Subsistence and kinship roles and responsibilities were woven together tightly.

Subsistence hunting among Inuit has traditionally been organized around kinship (Nuttall 2000). There has always been a fluid relationship between the hunter and the animal, with great respect of animals who sacrifice themselves to feed humans. As Pelly (2001: 27) indicates, “respect was the key to a successful hunt, and a successful hunt was the essence of survival.” The introduction of the rifle during the time of the whalers had already begun the individualization of hunting, and cooperative hunting such as that needed to ambush an animal was not as necessary (Bockstoe 1966). The settlements

further individualized Inuit life through the new wage economy focused on the nuclear family. Community-wide and extended kin economic cooperation was attenuated (Graburn & Strong 1975). The numbers of dogs and dog teams were reduced between 1930 and 1960 even though hunting continued to be the major economic activity (Damas 1963). Damas (1963) noted that religious affiliation was added to kinship regarding membership criteria of cooperative hunting parties during winter sea-ice hunting. He found hunting to still be a cooperative activity, however trapping for HBC and wage labour were more individualized. Social organization was affected by the introduction of trapping. Traditional breathing-hole seal hunting, for example, which involved large, cooperative gatherings of kin in the winter, became trapping done by isolated family groups (Bockstoce 1966; Condon 1988). This likely contributed to the simplification of kin structure described earlier by Burch (1975). New trapping partnerships were formed, beyond kinship to non-kin friendship. None of these changes destroyed or even changed substantially the social bond around hunting as these earlier acculturationists feared (Wenzel 2001). Since the government era began, however, hunting has continued to decrease, having also become very expensive (Damas 2002).

Munn (1986) points out that food giving is a basic form of generosity in many societies, and in hunting-trapping societies it has been central. The move toward individualism among Inuit extended to meat-sharing. Bockstoce (1966) found that in the early to mid 1960s Inuit hunters, while still sharing their meat, developed a consciousness of their having a “right” not to share their meat. In the old camps sharing involved everyone, but this could no longer take place in the settlements. Wenzel (1995) has noted that while food sharing or *ningiqtuq* is still practiced widely by Clyde River Inuit, the



settlement changed within-kin sharing to a new type of sharing between unrelated hunters who may also be of the same age. Sharing expanded to include non-kin, typically a peer with whom one hunted. Demand sharing has been identified as common among hunter gatherers, whereby sharing is an obligation or entitlement and can be used for debts that have been built up or paid off – serving as the Maussian gift (Bodenhorn 2000; Peterson 1993). Kelly (1995) indicated that demand sharing creates normal strains and tensions between people, and that this tension grows when group size is increased (see Meyers 1988). Damas (1963) indicated that by 1960-1961, with the much-increased population in Igloodik he saw hostility associated with what he called wide sharing, the sharing of meat, skins, money, and division of labour across the entire settlement. The settlement became a centre for material goods, and Damas reported that sharing was thus extended to all these goods (Adams 1972). A common effect of colonial change in hunter-gatherer societies is on older values and practices of humility and generosity, which move to “an emphasis on hoarding and boastfulness; from values that do not sanction violence to those that do” (Kelly 1995: 328). The population of Inuit camps prior to the settlements was determined, according to Damas (1969), by the degree to which hunting was maximized. The large government settlements changed this. Brantenberg (1977) believed that the practice of sharing changed because of contradictions in the changing Inuit economy, between a moral obligation to share and the new individualized cash economy. Unequal partnerships were being formed, such as the sharing of snow machines owned by one Inuk.

Mary-Lucie remembered meat sharing continuing in the early days of the settlement, and is more recently bothered by Inuit beginning to sell meat to each other.

“We used to try to say on the radio, ‘That’s not what we learned from our parents.’ Country food is for sharing, not to sell. If we want our husbands to catch more animals, we have to help other people.” I only heard this complaint from middle-aged and elderly women, not the men. Marie, age 56, indicated that hunting has become too expensive to share the meat the way it used to be shared. “But I never want my husband to say that,” she argued. “He has talked about it maybe two times now. I don’t listen to my husband. He goes out hunting, and when he comes in I go on the radio and ask if anybody wants to get some fish or caribou. They’re free for anybody who wants to come and eat. Lots of people come to my place to have something to eat. Almost every day. A few days ago a lady called me and told me, ‘I’m looking for caribou meat. I’ve got some money and want to buy meat.’ I told her, ‘If you’re going to buy it I’m not going to give you any.’” She added that if her husband would sell her some meat she would tell him to stop hunting because “he is not helping other people. That wasn’t the way our parents taught us. If we want our husband to have good hunting we should give people free food.” She said that meat sharing continues but that it is changing. A number of older women expressed this same sentiment, and would call in the radio station at lunch time to say this to the community.

An Inuk man I spoke with was born in Igloolik in 1956, and his was one of the families who were there originally. He remembered learning to hunt with his father and learning how to manage the dog team at the young age of six. His experience has become more unusual today. Many young men told me that they cannot hunt because they cannot afford it and had no snow machines. Edward, age 29, said that he has not been able to hunt for the last decade. “I have no snow machine, no rifle, so I don’t hunt anymore.” He

was still able to get his meat, or *niqui*, for free. He thought that another community to the north, Pond Inlet, had more youth hunting and said he thought that they were more traditional there. He noted that hunters are hired by the Hamlet Council for the annual caribou Christmas feast. Another man in his early 30s, Solomon, owns a dog team of seven dogs and a snow machine, and was going for Arctic char every second day. Hunting for him was good, and he said that he often brings back “too much.” There was much fishing for char during the year I was in Igloolik, and I was well supplied from my hunter friends.

The sharing of meat is one of the most important current symbols of sharing among Inuit. Sharing is a valued traditional way of life, one that was essential for both physical and social survival. Inuit view the eating of country food as important to health, and as a connection to culture. As we have seen, some Inuit can become angry when meat-sharing is no longer a form of community members taking care of each other. Yet hunting has become a source of income for many hunters. I was also buying meat from hunters who were selling it in the community, and receiving it for free from Inuit hunter friends.

In the Unikkaartuit study we asked Inuit about meanings of health. Across all ages and both genders the concept of health was centred on eating country food. Food references often mentioned being on the land and hunting. One middle-aged man said that health was “a healthy family, normal living, eating caribou meat.” A 21-year old male also responded with “What makes me healthy is eating country food and healthy food,” and a 17-year old male said about health, “When I go camping, fishing and other hunting.” Even a 14-year-old girl indicated that “country food makes me healthy.” As

noted in the previous chapter, hunting has been especially important for a healthy male identity. Goldstein (2004) found that family communication was much improved when they were on the land together. Hunting and being on the land continues to be a vital aspect of Inuit life. May is a favourite month for a great many Inuit men, for this is when the bright sun and warmth call one to the land.

Yet hunting has changed considerably. Increasing contact with *Qallunaat* during the twentieth century affected subsistence hunting. Some have suggested that the introduction of rifles began a trend from cooperation to individualization in hunting, and others have argued that kin structure was simplified. Meat-sharing changed when aggregated numbers of Inuit in the settlement found there to be too many people to be able to share the way they had shared previously. Wide sharing became problematic, and hunting today has become for many another source of income. This is creating some conflict in the communities where many Inuit believe that meat-sharing should remain as a symbol of sharing as mutual caring, independent of money. For these Inuit, money is replacing *ungayuq* where meat is shared with only those who can afford it. Poverty in Igloolik makes it clear that many Inuit will not be able to buy meat, let alone hunt for it. Some of these changes in hunting and sharing reflect a sense of culture loss among Inuit. Hunting is still practiced widely, however, and shows no signs of disappearing. Rather, there is an increase in programs across the four Inuit regions of Canada involving young male youth and elders going on the land to hunt together. Country food is still widely available, and free meat sharing especially within extended families is practiced throughout the community. Hunting is still sacred.

## **Schools**

Elder Theo Ikummaq believed that Inuit his age can support youth in both traditional and modern learning, reflecting widespread thought toward education among Inuit.

Youth were brought up in school, so their learning method is written material that they can follow for instruction, whereas the old Inuit way is hands on. You have to be at the location in order to learn, and that was the only method [elders] would know. Teaching methods have changed today. The elders want to be out there, teaching. But the people in the middle age like myself they rather do it both ways, and that's utilizing the better of both worlds. There is some classroom time, and some hands-on time out on the land. We do have a role, in that we know what works for the youth and what works for the elders. There has to be both" (Igloolik Oral History Project, IE-478)

One strong influence for Inuit to move to settlements, and a major factor restricting movement once there, was the creation of residential or federal day schools where children would spend the academic year without their families (Brody 1991 [1975]). Residential schools were first opened in Chesterfield Inlet in 1955, followed by Yellowknife in 1958, Inuvik in 1959, Churchill in 1964, and Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) in 1971 (King 1999). There was minimal consultation with Inuit about the development or running of these schools, which began to replace parents as sources of knowledge and values, of education. Based on information from the Department of Health and Welfare that traditional Inuit "country food" was unhealthy, Northern Affairs banned such food in the residential schools (King 1999). The school in Frobisher Bay had a reputation among

Inuit as a place of alcohol and vice, and students returning home told stories of drunkenness, violence, and female assault (Brody 1991 [1975]). The first *Qallunaat* teacher arrived in Port Harrison (Inukjuak) in 1950, and the Federal Day School program, developed in 1947, took off in 1957 (Crandall 2000). The Federal Day school opened in Igloolik in 1960. By 1964, about 75% of Inuit children between the ages of 6-15 were enrolled in school (Duffy 1988). Hostels were provided to accommodate students whose parents were not in the settlement (King 1999). Burch (1975: 37) referred to these schools as the “largest force of change” in Inuit society. The missionaries had previously been teaching Inuit English, elementary arithmetic, and the syllabic alphabet to be able to read the bible and hymn books. The residential and day schools have been described as assimilation factories (King 1999). Condon (1988: 159) found that the curriculum in the Holman school in 1982-83 was “unsuited to the special needs and learning styles of Inuit children.” All instruction was in English. Teachers were unprepared, were not learning Inuktitut, and had a very high turnover. Many teachers did not allow Inuit children to speak Inuktitut at school, and often punished them for doing so (Graburn 1964). Class attendance was required but was very poor, and children were several grades below their age level by southern standards. There was a strong disconnect between the schools and Inuit parents. Condon (1988) found most parents to be disapproving of *Qallunaat* education, yet their boys were hoping for jobs and money. Children’s values were becoming different from those of their parents. Barger (1977) found some Inuit who had attended residential school to be shamed about having physical features different from *Qallunaat*, such as not having a narrow face.

Residential schools were already identified within a decade of their opening as a bad idea by Brant and Hobart (1968 [1966]), in a paper that first appeared in a 1966 issue of the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. In a warning to the Canadian educational system, the authors wrote that the residential school program was merely an extension of the mission program and nothing more. Kirmayer et al. (2007: 65, 68) describe residential schools for Aboriginal Canadians as “one of the most destructive tools fashioned by the federal government in its attempts to forcibly assimilate Aboriginal people,” referring to this school system as “institutionalized pedophilia.” The residential schools were run by Catholic missionaries in cooperation with the state. The curriculum was based on the English, *Qallunaat* one from southern Canada, primarily Alberta. They reported that the effect of these schools on Inuit children was one of producing “an unhappy, dissatisfied, unadjusted child... especially marked was the children’s loss of respect for parents” (192). They added that “much of contemporary Eskimo education... is inappropriate, and perhaps dis-educative from the standpoint of preparation for the life children will lead as adults” (194). Brody (1991 [1975]: 208) indicated that for many Inuit parents, “their worst fears [concerning the residential schools] were rapidly realized by the disruption that such education caused to their children and to family life.” Brody reported seeing Inuit parents crying as their children were being taken away from them. It is interesting that this scenario was used in disciplinary tactics by some Inuit parents, who would threaten their children that they would be taken away by *Qallunaat* if they were not good (McElroy 1975). This also took place among the Cree in Quebec, and formed the title of a recent book by Toby Morantz (2002), *The White Man’s Gonna Getcha*. When Inuit children were away for a long period of time, such as in a southern hospital, they

would often experience “searing rejection” by their parents upon their return (Briggs 1998: 242). Maxwell (1994) found that children who were away at residential school went through this form of rejection, where they may not be re-integrated into their family and could be treated poorly, perhaps as orphans.

Mary-Lucie Uvuliq was sent to the Catholic residential school in Chesterfield Inlet between the ages of 5 and 13. She remembers the day school being built in the settlement of Igloolik in 1960, where she went after she left Chesterfield. She believes that Inuit were asked to move to the settlement to be with their children who were placed in the school by the government. In the residential school, she said that the children were not allowed to speak their language of Inuktitut. She began to forget her language and was laughed at when she would return to her family during the summer. She is fluent in Inuktitut, but has experienced difficulty with language, saying, “Lots of people tell me that I’m speaking wrong. Even now, the people tell me I’m speaking wrong. My Inuktitut is no good. So I told them I don’t care. I was taught how to speak English.” A young Inuk man in his late 20s talked of his father who had been to Chesterfield residential school. His father had abused alcohol while this man was growing up. “He never recovered,” said the young man. One man, mentioned in the previous chapter, was sexually abused at Chesterfield by a priest he named Brother Andre and mentioned another abuser named Brother Paul. A number of men in Igloolik spoke to me about Brother Andre in this way. He said that there were four abusers still alive who would be appearing in court because of this abuse. He was part of a class action lawsuit and was expecting some money from this. This man was still very angry about the abuse. A man in his 50s who had been at Chesterfield named another priest, Father Parent, who was an abuser. This man said that



his father encouraged him to go, saying that it would be good for his future. He had learned to hunt with his father, and knew that his father had been proud of him. Another man, age 48, talked about crying and seeing his parents crying when he was taken away to Chesterfield. "I've been meaning to ask my parents what was going on in their minds when we were going through that, and we missed them nine months out of the year. We stayed away." He talked about the mindset of the teachers and the school. "The federal government, I guess, thought that Inuit, we were not civilized in their view, in their eyes. We had to become civilized. The way to do it was for us to be assimilated into their culture which they thought was the only, or the best, the good one. We had to be assimilated because we Inuit were still living primitive. They had to change our way of thinking, and the way to do that was for us children to learn about their ways, out in school. And that's what they did. They would control us." He then commented, "Back then I was already damaged. I was terribly sexually abused by a Catholic Brother. I had no self-esteem, or very little self-esteem because of the abuse I had to endure. That left a big mark on me. The way I do things, the way that I am today is connected to my past. My life has not been very good, and that affects my family life. I had got into drugs and alcohol. I've destroyed a lot, a lot of lives over the years. I've damaged a lot of lives because of my pain, because of what I'm carrying." He went to a support group in Igloolik for abused men and found it to be very helpful, and believed that more such groups are needed. In 1996, Catholic Bishop Reynald Rouleau issued a formal apology in Igloolik to Inuit for physical and sexual abuse at Chesterfield (Phillips, 1996)

Children first sent to the day school in Igloolik without their parents stayed in a hostel until their parents moved to the settlement. Leah, a 55-year-old woman, indicated

that there were two hostels in the mid-1960s. Another woman about the same age who went to Chesterfield residential school thought that most Inuit moved to the settlement to be with their children. Louise Akearok, a woman in her early 40s, had parents who differed in their opinions about whether she should attend school. Her father was against it, saying she did not need it because it had nothing to do with their people. Her mother encouraged her to go.

Many middle-aged and elderly Inuit today have mixed feelings about the role of schools in the communities, however parents have placed a value on their children receiving Western education. In the Unikkaartuit project we asked Inuit the year before the territory was formed in 1999 what their hopes were for the new Nunavut territory. Most Inuit youth hoped for jobs, yet they were aware that the jobs would first go to those with at least a high school education. An Inuk friend showed me his son's report card from the high school. It showed mostly A and A+ grades, and he told me how proud he was that his son was doing well in school. Another woman with a daughter in high school said that she tells her daughter "that school is her number one priority." One Inuk friend who has small girls in school said that she has seen how her children are becoming *Qallunaat* through school. "When they were very little they spoke Inuktitut and were Inuit. Now I see them becoming *Qallunaat*." Although she referred to language, she was speaking about a larger order of identity. She herself was very familiar with both the traditional and new Western worlds, however was saddened that traditional Inuit identity was diminishing.

The historical record of schooling of Inuit children is incomplete. While some Inuit parents were supportive of their children going to school, others were not. There is

Inuit testimony that many felt pressured to send their children to school, and there are many negative memories of the residential schools. Is this another “stolen generation” as has been described in Australia with the removal of Aboriginal children from their families (Mellor & Haebich 2002, NSW Aboriginal Corporation & Wilson 1997)? Do Inuit think their children were stolen? There was certainly a policy of child removal in the name of education. Traumatic memories of abuse and the apology by the Catholic Church for these abuses in the residential schools attests to much personal and collective damage beyond the mere removal of children. Schooling has been part of the colonial assimilation project, and Inuit today are more involved in Western education. Some of the teachers are now Inuit, especially in the early grades, although I have not seen any Inuit principals in the communities I have visited. Language immersion programs are in place where classes are held in Inuktitut until grade three, after which English is introduced. There is yet to be established an Inuktitut school in Nunavut, yet a French school already exists in Iqaluit. Some schools teach Inuit traditional skills such as boys making the *kakivaq* or fish spear for an annual fishing derby, and girls making *kamik* or sealskin boots, and these are credit courses. The blending of Inuit traditional and Western knowledge in education remains a key challenge.

### **Inter-Generational Relations**

Social change has an effect on family life. Howard Gardner (1998) described a change in the Euro-American family that has taken place over the past few centuries, which he identified as the move from the “vertical” to the “horizontal” family. In vertical families, strong communicative and affectional bonds exist across living generations,

whereas in horizontal families these bonds are seen within age cohorts. In horizontal families, fewer ties exist across the generations and close communication – even the spending of time together – occurs more often among those of approximately the same age. Gardner noted that since Europeans arrived in North America they have become increasingly horizontal in their relationships, adding to the well-known argument for “the decline of the American family” (Harrell, 1997: xvi). Generations in North America have become increasingly segregated within extended families and more generally (e.g., Bly 1996; Hareven 2000, Mannheim 1952), and friendship has to an extent replaced traditional kinship ties (DeVos 1976; Turner 1999). This has been taking place cross-culturally as one form of domestic and relational globalization, where shared experiences are more common within than across generations (De Vos 1978). In a world of accelerating speed of change in technology and information, this may not be surprising (Bertman 1998; Gleick 1999). Writing about social memory, Connerton (1989: 3) indicates that “participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory.” Generations become socially segregated when their shared memories begin to differ substantially. Among Indigenous peoples experiencing rapid social change, it is not just different memories but different modes of thought, as Ross (2002) found among the Lacandon Maya of southern Mexico, that create barriers between generations.

If Gardner’s geometric metaphor is applied to the Inuit family, rather than taking a few centuries the move from vertical to horizontal has shifted suddenly in only the last three generations. The collaborative study by Wachowich, Agalakti, Kaukjak, and Katsak (2001) of three generations of Inuit within one family confirms that great differences in lived experience do indeed exist across living age cohorts, and this cultural change

continues to have its greatest impact on youth (Condon, 1988; O'Neil, 1986). This change across generations of Inuit was already apparent in the early 1970s (Brody, 1991 [1975]). O'Neil (1983) proposed the idea of *age cohort cultures* for Inuit. He found a high degree of within-age consciousness present by the late 1970s. The age focus seems to have shifted from age difference as important to age sameness as important.

Intergenerational segregation is now identified by Inuit as a problem (Kral 2003). Each living age cohort of Inuit has had a different life from the next in the context of strong and rapid social change (O'Neil, 1986). Such high-speed social change often places communities and individuals at risk for significant social problems including domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide (Kral, 1998). "Older people are kind of stuck," said Paul Quassa, a chief negotiator of the Nunavut territorial boundary and current mayor of Igloolik. "The system is making their children so independent." He talked about youth being more disconnected from their families than ever before, from their parents and grandparents. According to Godelier, Trautman and Tjon Sie Fat (1998), kinship-based societies are vanishing from the world.

Intergenerational segregation may be one component of the globalization that is contributing to this, especially in societies experiencing high-speed social change.

The role of Inuit elders in teaching decreased after World War II (Burch 1975). Burch attributes this primarily to the increase in children in the settlement and to the replacement of elders and parents by the schools. He also saw influence of mass media: television, radio, and magazines. Vallee (1967a: 210) wrote that Inuit youth and young adults in 1959-60 were being "confronted with the fact that their own parents and grandparents are considered inferior 'role models' by representatives of the dominant

society.” This was being reinforced in the new schools. Condon (1988) found that by the early 1980s many young children could not speak with their grandparents or other elders because of their poor Inuktitut.

Condon (1988) studied Inuit youth in Holman, a settlement just beyond the western edge of Nunavut. By the early 1980s, parents and children there were highly disapproving of each other. Parents did not like the behaviour of their teenagers, who were staying up all night and sleeping most of the day, having multiple sexual partners, and playing sports over other things parents viewed as more important. The teenagers, on the other hand, were against their parents’ drinking. In Igloolik Marie-Lucie, age 56, said that “A lot of adults and elders are putting the teenagers down so much. The elders don’t know how today’s life changed from the past. If the younger people today could listen better to the adults, they would have a bit more understanding of where they had to go.” An adolescent peer group had developed that had a huge impact on kinship and community structure (Condon 1988). This is the peer group that had started as children in the settlements, the first of its kind in Inuit society. Indeed, Vallee (1962) referred to groups of middle and late teens as “gangs” in the new settlements of the early 1960s. Condon found that adult supervision/regulation of youth was minimal, perhaps corresponding to traditional freedom given to children. This earlier freedom, however, was within the boundaries of kin roles and parents did maintain sufficient control (Briggs 1970).

Condon, like others, attributed the decrease of family-centred life to the large numbers of Inuit in the settlements. Adolescents were by then rarely seen with adults, including their parents, and often complained of being bored. Condon found that about

half the adults in the community he was in were drinking excessively, and that domestic fights were common during or after adult drinking parties. These adults were members of what might be called Canada's "stolen generation," those who had been taken from their parents and sent to boarding schools as children. In another community, O'Neil (1983) also found that by the late 1970s and early 1980s the youth same-age peer group was very important and a "refuge" from adults. Like Condon, he found adolescents spending very little time with adults. Cliques within this peer group were influenced by kinship and religious denomination. Condon (1988) found that teenagers valued each other more than they did adults, and concluded that the creation of the adolescent peer group was perhaps the most anomalous cultural invention of the settlements.

Also conducting research in Holman in 1997, Collings (1999) found that most elders lived apart from their adult children, and that their importance and status had diminished over the years. Cross-generational visiting was limited to the family. No Inuit under age 30 was fluent in the native language of Inuinaqtun (a dialect of Inuktitut), and it was not taught in the school. The only kin terms used in the community were for the eldest daughter (*panik*) and son (*irngniq*). In Igloolik, these terms plus *anana* for mother and *atata* for father are still used. Kinship terminology has been changing, and Eggan (1966: 38) reported that used of kin terms are "remarkably sensitive indicators of social and cultural change." In spite of these changes, Collings found that elders still held important roles within the community and within families. He also found that Inuit traditional cultural values and beliefs held across the age span about what a normative life course should be, demonstrating an important form of cultural continuity. A male youth in Igloolik spoke to me about elders' wisdom about youth, saying "They [elders] have

more knowledge of what its like being a young person. They usually get the better answer to what problems you have.” However, the normative development of *ihuma* (*isuma* further east, including Igloodik), the reasoning and emotional maturity highly valued by Inuit, was identified by Collings as at risk due to weaker ties across generations.

Alcohol has had a significant and negative effect on Inuit relatedness, and this relatedness has in turn had an effect on alcohol use. Changes in family patterns began to determine who was at higher risk for alcohol-related problems. O’Neil (1983) found that young Inuit men coming from large families with much interaction, his definition of family integrity, had significantly lower alcohol use and fewer stress-related visits to the nursing station. Such visits to the nursing station were particularly associated with young men having fewer older men in their families. Youth in arranged marriages consumed less alcohol than those who had chosen their own partners, and young men in arranged marriages, in the more traditional families, generally “stood out from their peers as both successful hunters and able workers” (O’Neil 1983: 266).

There are many forms of belonging for Inuit, the primary one being the family. The sense of belonging, or *ilagijauttiarniq*, has been very much patterned on intergenerational relations within families. “It’s mostly elders,” said one young man when asked about this, “like if they ask me to go to their house, if they want me to be with them, even for that short time. They’re accepting me when they call me to see if I have enough country food, if I’ve eaten lately.” In the Unikkaaruit project we found that many elders said they were waiting for young people to come to them to learn. “Right now they’re just waiting,” said a middle-aged Inuk. In the words of one Inuit elder, “A lot of elders don’t say anything, but that doesn’t mean they don’t want to help. They’re just



there waiting” (Kral et al. 2000). Another middle-aged Inuk indicated that “Sometimes the young people are saying that they don’t know how to approach the elders today. In the past it was different.” One elder, a woman, was concerned that some Inuit stay away from elders’ advice. “Maybe in this community they’re thinking that if I scold him for what he’s not supposed to do, maybe if I talk to him, maybe he’s going to suicide.” There is some generalized fear that scolding youth may place them at risk for suicide.

Both youth and elders complain about each other. Yet we found that the youth were also waiting for the elders. Youth are concerned that elders disapprove of them, of their independence and of their not hunting or making skin clothing or learning about the land. Many elderly males told me that every year a few youth die on the land, and this is because they have not learned from elders about the land. When speaking about part of Inuit culture being “lost,” a male youth in his late 20s indicated “mainly the words are getting lost. We don’t use much of the language since we’re not out on the land anymore. Words would be kind of difficult to remember because we don’t use them anymore.” An example I asked about was the *uqaluraq*, meaning tongue, the shape of hard snow from constant wind from the northwest. The hard ones, almost ice, are always pointing in the same northwest-southeast direction. This is the compass of the land, because if one is lost on the land and sees the direction of the *uqaluraq*, one can find one’s way back home. I asked many young men whether they were familiar with this term, and most were unfamiliar with the word in Inuktitut. Some elders talked about youth speaking “baby talk” in Inuktitut, that the youth were forgetting important parts of their language. This implies an absence of the development of *isuma*, the knowledge and wisdom learned through experience as children grow up. Tester and McNicoll (2004) report that many

Inuit youth are poor in both Inuktitut and English. The youth are of course in their increasingly global worlds, including the internet, so the disconnect between youth and elders is considerable. Yet the importance of this connection is apparent to everyone. Inuit youth who spend time with their elders are very pleased with this, as are the elders. In one case, I helped a distressed youth identify an elder who he had been close with when he was younger. He was not close with his parents and had no adult to speak with about his troubles. This youth began to visit the elder and told me a few months later how much this was benefiting him.

In Igloodik, the Inuit film company Isuma has been actively involved in helping youth learn traditional cultural values and practices. In the two major films by Isuma, in which Iglulingmiut were the actors (and writers), the youth involved in the film spoke of the value of learning about their culture. During the making of the film *Atanarjuat: The Fats Runner*, one male youth, age 19, talked about the importance of young people working together with adults and elders on the making of this film. This young man told of how being involved in making the film made him feel good about himself “because it tells me how my ancestors used to live, and I see it with my own eyes and I see the environment how it was before.”

During the filming of a second major film production, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, which finished shooting in 2005, Isuma involved Inuit youth in an apprenticeship program. Participants received on-the-job training in filmmaking, television, and website design. One of these youth, Jason Kunnuk, spoke about how being on the sets and working with Inuit filmmakers and actors strengthened his sense of belonging and how it had a profound and positive effect on him. “I can’t find the words

to express how I really felt looking at the people, my history, and how they worked so hard for us to be here.” He reported feeling encouraged and motivated to “maintain my culture.” He added that the experience made him aware that suicide “is not the Inuit way.” Meeting the challenge of blending two cultural worlds together was made more clear to him, Jason said, and he shared a metaphor he has found helpful through the image of the *kamutiq*, or sled. The sled, historically, was made of “organic material. Right now it’s [made of] wood, plastic, rope ... [yet] it still has the same purpose. We know where we came from. We know pretty much where we’re going. But sometimes when you get lost, you could look back, behind your tracks, to see which mistakes you did. And mainly to look forward, to going on forward ... it always goes forward.”

Increasingly, Inuit communities are organizing meetings between elders and youth, and many camping trips are taking place. Elder and youth camps are occurring across the Arctic, and several elder-youth conferences have been organized. Helping elders was a highly valued activity by the youth committees I worked with in Igloolik and Qikiqtarjuaq. The Ammituq Youth Society I was working with closely in Igloolik was planning the re-opening of the Youth Centre in the community, and the youth were planning for the Centre’s activities. One of these activities was having elders speak in a weekly series, teaching them about Inuit culture. The youth viewed this a very important for their well-being. Youth are now approaching elders again, which is in their tradition. This is viewed by Inuit as critical learning and important healing. A number of Inuit youth still see their parents as teachers. One young man spoke about his family helping him to do this. “My family members tell me that even though I’m in school that I shouldn’t turn White,” he said. “So I had to keep up with that, go out hunting with my

dad. Kept me busy instead of staying home too long, I kept going out hunting with my dad. Try to remember what my culture was like, although we lost, well, more than half our culture now. We don't know what to do, we get stuck."

## **Parenting**

At the time when we have been urbanized our life style had changed dramatically especially when the *Qallunaat* had taken over our children's lives. Our children are confused by the *Qallunaat*, as for ourselves we had taken some initiatives but find that we are no longer able to control our children the way we did in the past. This is going to get harder and harder for us to carry on the burden towards our children. In the years past each of the family did not have too many children so therefore the children were more obedient. When our parents told us to do something we would not hesitate to carry out the task that was asked of us. We were able to do the bidding of a person without any hesitation. But now we find that even though we ask our children to do a task for us they will not listen and just turn a deaf ear on us. They no longer visit their relatives. It is now up to us to take corrective action which no doubt is no easy task.

Elder Zachariasie Uqalik Aqiaruq, 1993  
(Igloodik Oral History Project IE-269)

Elder Leoni Qrunnut spoke to me of there being two types of parents: (1) those who learned parenting skills from their older generation, but who now fit more poorly with modernism, and (2) those who did not learn parenting skills. Children from the second group are less connected to their parents, from what Leoni has seen. These would include her children's generation, the middle-aged adults who attended residential and

day schools. She talked about traditional child-rearing and said that much child-rearing today is wrong, such as giving a crying child what it wants. This is not good, according to Leoni. She said that it was like this sometimes before the government era and that it was also problematic then. Joseph Auksaq, age 26, agreed when he expressed, "We have equal rights so the kids have the same rights as parents. I think that's the biggest problem. Now kids can talk back."

Leoni further spoke about children needing to learn to express their pain, their unhappiness, to their parents. Leoni said that she is still learning, and that she has learned from her children. She said that children want to hear an apology from their parents, and that this is good, a part of their healing. She talked about how she did this with her children and how it improved their relationships with her. Regarding youth/young adults, in Leoni's family she said that they have opened up to their parents about almost everything, and are still doing this. Leoni talked about a problem she had had with one son. He was distant from his parents, her and Anthony. It was only when she apologized to him that he disclosed a major guilt feeling he had been hiding for a long time. His little sister had died when they were out camping, and he felt responsible. He was very young at that time. He felt much better disclosing this to his parents. Leoni went on about parenting, and said that parents should be supportive and accepting of their children disclosing to them. She said that youth have to distance themselves from what is being talked about. She used the word *sidludjutigilugu*, meaning "rejecting." "Don't reject what your children are saying to you." The other term she mentioned was *sirnarniq*, or "siding with your own child." This was referred to as *sirnaaq* by elder Rachel Pittaaluk Ujarasuk in 2002, who spoke about not taking sides with one of your children against the others.

“When they get to an age of independence, they will start to try and dominate their parents. She said that when children began going to school, the parents started to make them do as they please. These are the things that will make a child behave negatively. She added that when a child is brought up “with proper discipline” the child will be “well thought of... and will help other s positively.” Rachel spoke of the consequences of letting children do as they please. “This is asking the child what the child wants and you do every demand, and in so doing you are spoiling the child. If you have control over the child, not asking what the child wants, this will be a good, disciplined child. That is the way it is” (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-497). Another elder, Elizabeth Nutarakittuq who was interviewed in 1990, spoke of life of the camp before moving to the settlement, saying that children “never cried because they didn’t get what they wanted. If a child is treated too lenient while the child was in the age of growing up, the mother becomes frightened of her own child when the child grows up” (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-125). Elder Marie Uviluq, interviewed in 1995, talked about her childhood. “I am now grateful for accomplishing duties that were required of me then. We were made to be acceptable human beings. The elders and our parents would wait for us to make mistakes, then we would be reminded to make the right choice in life. Perhaps, when they saw that we were going astray from the path they wanted us to take, they would try to salvage what we did. I think that we of the older generation are leading the way of life which was expected of us” (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-341).

Listening to parents and elders was believed to lead to a longer and happier life. Elder Bernard Iquugaqtuq shared his memory of this (Bennet & Rowley 2004: 24):

The old saying is that an older person is always wiser than a younger one. Some

of the older people say that the one who listens to his parents will live longer. If you listen to the older people and are told to do something, you will live longer and have a better life. Or if the sons and daughters didn't listen to their parents in those days, they would die young or have a harder time in later years. The ones who would listen to their parents would live longer and have a happier life and be respected by other people.

Youth (not) spending time with their parents was a frequent topic of conversation I had with middle-aged Inuit. Marie-Lucie asked of male youth and their fathers, "Are they going out hunting with him? Are they walking with them on the streets, going to the stores, you know? No. None of that is happening." She added, "It's not the young people. It's the parents who are not taking time with their children." A middle-aged woman talked about children not spending time with their parents. This woman, age 50, spoke of the time when she was a teenager. "We didn't spend days with our mothers learning to sew anymore because we were in school. We would just have breakfast and leave our family. And just come home for lunch, and then go again. After school you could go off with your friends." She indicated that she did not learn how to parent, saying, "Parenting skills, family, how to behave, you know, all of that we dropped. We didn't have time anymore." She said that in the earlier days of the settlement the children "were basically running around. Just basically out of control. The parents couldn't be there. They were not teachers anymore. In the camp they were. They were the leaders, and we're not the leaders here. The setup has changed." Many Inuit spoke about *Qallunaat* teachers taking over their roles with the children. It was a different form of education. "We were never taught through words," remarked Elder Uqsuralik Ottokie, "It was only through

observing and listening that we learned... we were not encouraged to ask questions” (Briggs 2000: 58-59). Another elder, Samonie Elizabeth Kanayuk, spoke about parents as teachers. “Children as young as five years old used to go out hunting with their fathers because they were students, because their fathers were teaching them” (Bennett & Rowley 2001: 14). A large number of children had Inuit parents believe that they just lost control over their children. Allan Auksaq, age 18 and the president of the Youth Society, talked about many youth. “They just don’t know the meaning of family now. I think its healthy to be with your family. Maybe the time you spend with your family isn’t there, I don’t know.” Kurt, another member of the Youth Society, saw that youth get along better with their families when they are out camping together. Many Inuit acknowledged this in a study of the land and healing among Inuit by Goldstein (2004). A large number of Inuit believe they can no longer spank their children, and a large number said that it is now against the law. “Now we are not allowed to spank our children anymore, because we got the Social Services. In the past it was different. We used to spank our children as long as they are not listening.”

Many Inuit families still hold to the more traditional *naalaqtuq* and *ungajuq*, respect and affection. One middle-aged mother, Louise, was proud of her daughter who was 17 years old. Her daughter makes tea for visitors, cleans up, and helps her elders frequently. When she asked her daughter why she was doing these things, her daughter replied that she had learned this by watching her mother and that she was pleased with the way she had been parented. One young woman told me about an incident that made her realize the importance of listening to her parents. Her father had asked her to clean up the house some time during that week. She said he had a tone in his voice that was



serious yet respectful that she would make her own decision in doing this. “He didn’t tell me to do it right now, and he didn’t say that there would be consequences if I didn’t do it.” She told me that at first she did no cleaning and brushed off her father’s request. But later that week, “it was bothering me. I could not forget what he said.” She noted that there had been love in his voice and heart for her, and that she felt this. She cleaned up the house later that week. She indicated that she would be like this with her children. An Inuk woman age 50 believed that parenting was the key to youth wellness, and that adults should remember the good things they were taught and pass it on to their children. Sanders (1999: 117) writes in his memoir that “Family is the first community that most of us know. When families fall apart, as they are doing at an unprecedented rate, those who suffer through the breakup often lose faith not only in marriage but in every human bond.” Sanders was writing about the American family, however his assessment applies across cultures.

Changes in parenting was thus a major theme in my discussions with Inuit across the ages. The large number of children growing up together in the settlement together with teachers taking over the education of children from the parents, in addition to many residential school Inuit saying to me that they had never learned proper parenting, has had parents believe that they lost control over their children. Many are afraid to discipline their children for fear of their children becoming suicidal or the law should they ever spank them. Television, as discussed in the next chapter, has had a profound influence on youth who model Hollywood youth, so the children have also changed. A new childhood emerged from the government era in which there were collisions of teachers and parents, freedom and discipline, and collectivism-individualism. The traditional model of

childhood was subverted. Settlement life was largely modeled on southern Canada by a government that did not recognize or even ask about Inuit family life. Parenting was appropriated. Sen (2005) describes colonial childhood as one redefined by an imposing government in a nationalizing project. Patterns of attachment have changed in a culture where the family bond has been its base (Briggs 1995).

## **Marriage**

In *The Foraging Spectrum*, Kelly (1995: 287) wrote that “[u]nderstanding marriage, like understanding kinship, means understanding how interpersonal relations and group affiliations are constructed, negotiated, and manipulated over time.” Lévi-Strauss (1969 [1949]: 483) called marriage the archetype of exchange. Meyers (1986: 173, 175) similarly located marriage as an element in an “organized framework of reciprocal exchange,” as “one means of reproducing relatedness.” Divorce, remarriage, spouse exchange, and polygamy/polygeny were forms of Inuit family structure that either disappeared or went underground for some time, under pressures from missionaries, police, and government representatives. Polygamy and spouse exchange were banned by the missionaries, yet some resistance to this continued (Trott 1997). Graburn (1964) found that RCMP forcibly removed two of three wives of a highly respected Inuk man and sent them to distant communities, an act commonly done by these police. Vallee (1967a) found one polygamous household in Baker Lake in 1959-60, and estimated that the prevalence of this had previously been about 25%.

Females have greater longevity than males across most animal species, and among humans most husbands predecease their wives. Among Inuit, instead of quickly

remarrying following the death of their husbands, which was the traditional custom, by 1959-1960 widows stayed single, remained attached to the family of one of their children, and usually lived alone in their own tent. Most were under the age of 45, so many of their traditional kin/gender roles were diminished or gone. Some *naalaqtuq* authority-respect was gained by those widows who received more government financial relief (Vallee 1967a).

One of the more significant disruptions of kin structure by the aggregated settlement was the eventual loss of the arranged marriage. Already by 1960 in Igloodik Malaurie (2007) reported the priest encouraging one young couple to refuse this arrangement, which they did. It was still the norm in the mid-1970s and taking place in many families in the early to mid 1980s, but parents were now encouraging particular partners yet letting their children decide (Condon 1988, Wenzel, 2004 personal communication). By the 1990s it appears to have almost disappeared. Graburn (1964) identified what he called “the marriage problem” in the late 1950s and early to mid 1960s, one he claims began in the mid-1950s when the settlement program took hold. The 1949 census already showed that among Inuit young people were marrying later and that the birth rate was increasing (Damas 1963). By the late 1950s, young Inuit in the settlements were either marrying later or not at all. They were blaming their parents for this while the parents were blaming each other for their “promiscuous” children. Elders were attributing the much higher promiscuity than they had ever known to the large number of Inuit in the settlements.

Traditional economic reasons for marriage had changed, and the number of potential mates was now huge. The baby boom among Inuit in the 1950s magnified this

problem even more a generation later. By the late 1950s, parental authority was already declining and specifically concerning marriage (Hughes 1960). Rather than infant betrothal, in the new settlements parents were being asked for their permission to marry someone by their children. Parents were postponing their decisions and adding conditions. Between 1954-1959, Graburn counted 37% of potential marriages in one settlement to have been prevented by parents, with many more prevented more indirectly. At that time, virtually all couples were abiding by their parents' wishes for them not to marry someone. Graburn found several reasons explaining why parents were not letting their children marry. The first was that many of the young women's mothers were widows, and because they were no longer remarrying they needed their daughters to help them with work and thus refused to let them go. Older Inuit men were also less likely to remarry and also wanted their daughters helping them out at home. Previously, widows and widowers would have adopted their children out and remarried. Other reasons were that the number of Inuit involved in the decision for a young couple to be married was large and included a missionary, thus adding a derailing complexity as well as a shift away from the more traditional methods of decisions for betrothal.

In the early 1960s, arranged marriage was still being practiced among Inuit already living in the settlements, however here the children being so arranged were primarily among Inuit in the settlement or between settlements rather than with those still living on the land (Vallee 1962). Such arrangements were being made among the wealthiest Inuit families in the settlements, reflecting a growing class system. Girls were refusing to marry young men on the land, choosing settlement men over them even in arranged marriages. Vallee (1967a) believed that young people were not getting married

as young as they had earlier because of the new wage economy. Early marriage was not affordable due to high unemployment and the new poverty. Many more young women did not want to get married than young men, and Graburn attributed this more generally to two things: (1) A change in the *naalaqtuq* obedience relationship with parents. This *naalaqtuq* relationship was changing, yet young adult children still did not want to disobey their parents. The norm of having the couple live initially with the girl's family was being challenged by couples refusing to do this. Young people were creating their own rules. A conflict concerning *naalaqtuq* had begun, and this shift took place over time. (2) Young people being extremely confused about courtship. "Many of the young men and girls just do not know how to carry out a successful courtship under present-day conditions. They are at a loss for what to do..." (Graburn 1964: 196-197). He pointed out that the courting mechanisms of fathers no longer worked for their male children. By the early 1980s, the issue of arranged versus chosen marital partners had become, according to O'Neil (1983: 264), the "most significant issue in the marital arrangement." Some of the effects of this change in arranged marriage and parental guidance of sexual/marital partners are discussed in the next chapter, particularly as it relates to suicide.

## **Gender Role**

McElroy (1977) studied continuity and change in Inuit gender roles between 1967-1970. She found male gender roles to be changing rather than those for females, and attributed much of this to the new authority of *Qallunaat* in the settlements. While female gender roles were supported by *Qallunaat*, including the preparation of skin clothing for trade and their roles in child-rearing, Inuit male autonomy was degraded by

even the whalers and missionaries. McElroy (1977: 53) found that the “status and self-esteem of the native men were threatened.” This gender difference in response to colonial culture change, where men appear to do worse than women, has been noted by many anthropologists around the world including Mead (1932), Hallowell (1942), and Spindler and Spindler (1958). Mathiasson (1972) considered in “Canadian Arctic tradition” that Inuit women were expected to give sexual favours to HBC managers for whom they worked, and reported it to have been common for these favours to be given in exchange for the woman’s husband or father getting work. By the government era, however, Inuit women were making their own choices more clearly. A number of Inuit women were preferring *Qallunaat* men, and preferring Inuit men working in the settlements to those hunting in the camps (McElroy 1975). Inuit women were finding more employment in the settlements than were men, and many were marrying *Qallunaat* men. McElroy also found that male children identified with traditional Inuit roles more than did female children. Young Inuit women were more interested in school, while young Inuit men were acting out through “bravado and recklessness” (55). McElroy concluded that the problem was centred on a conflict between the higher status of *Qallunaat* over Inuit in the settlements and traditional Inuit gender roles that were changing due to the influence of this new way of being. A new order of rules and conventions for gender was appearing in the settlements.

Brody (1991 [1975]) also reported changing gender roles among Inuit during the early 1970s. Men’s status diminished because hunting was done only sporadically, and they increasingly had occasional wage labour. Women were sending their husbands on errands and were getting preferred cuts of meat, something that was not done before.

Women chose their own extramarital sexual partners, and no longer accompanied their husbands hunting where previously they would do repair sewing, etc. Brody saw Inuit men as emasculated.

Other gender roles were changing within the settlements. Women were bonding in larger groups while men would be away more often and for longer periods of time. Mothers became the primary caretakers of children, a task that was more evenly shared with men before the settlements. Through the churches, women organized themselves in various groups, including bible study and sewing. Men were less involved in settlement church activities. The women began to gain community leadership positions within and because of these groups. They also began to manage their own finances, and opened accounts for their children (Mathhiason 1972). Bodenhorn (1990) also found Inupiat men to be less interested in taking on *Qallunaat* values than women. An important question here is how changes in one gender affected the other. How did men respond to these new roles among women? And were the women responding to changes among the men? We will only begin to explore these questions of reciprocal response here, and although difficult, research is needed to get a sense of this from elders' memories. Some earlier anthropologists began an exploration of this.

O'Neil (1983) reported serious gender role tension among Inuit youth in the late 1970s-early 1980s, being more emotionally charged and salient as had been reported a decade or more earlier by Balikci (1970) and Graburn (1969). By the early 1980s, girls were being given more responsibilities at a younger age than were boys, who were increasingly "spoiled" and being experienced as a "drain" on family resources (money for snow machine repair, hockey, hunting, etc.) (Condon 1988).

Like all things Inuit that have been described as interactive, unified, or holistic (e.g., Fienup-Riordan 1986; Wenzel 1981), gender roles have been that too. Bodenhorn (1990) describes, for example, how Inupiat wives were critical to successful hunting. By attracting animals, Inupiat husbands saw their wives as hunters. Such cooperation extended to most activities, from meat sharing to child rearing. Some of this cooperation has decreased. But much cooperation still persists in family life. In spite of changing roles for Inuit women, Reimer (1996: 77) found that there was a persistence in their role as “keeper of the camp” and of a resilient female consciousness not only as mothers and wives, but as community workers and leaders. Gender roles have continued to be well-defined as separate and experienced as such, even though they have changed for each sex (Condon 1988; Condon & Stern 1993).

Conflict regarding gender roles among youth and between generations, with difficulties particularly among young men, has been documented in other cultures experiencing high-speed Westernization and social change (Gregor & Tuzin 2001; Lowe 2003; Medicine & Jacobs 2001; Spindler & Spindler 1958; Tuzin 1997). A number of writers have indicated that Indigenous female roles retain stability through colonial change at the level of the domestic and private world, while those of men are especially changed concerning their status and authority with women and with each other. This status inconsistency, when that of women has begun to supersede the status of men in a way contrary to traditional norms, often leads to violence against women (Campbell 1999; McClusky 2001). The loss of autonomy and *naalaqtuq* among men would, I suggest, appear to be central problems resulting from increased colonialism and the government era. It is likely that gender role change has been particularly difficult for



Inuit men. This may account for some of the severe problems being experienced in romantic relationships among youth today. It is a topic in need of research and intervention.

### **Romantic Love and Sexuality**

Rather than being a Western, European invention of the Renaissance, Jankowiak and Fischer (1992) found romantic love to exist in most societies around the globe and argued that it is a human universal. Yet Burch (1975) claimed he did not find love in the Western sense to be part of the marital relationship among the Inupiat in northwest Alaska. He found that while emotions toward marital partners were generally positive, public expression of this was minimal. By the 1960s, however, he noted what he called a transformation in marital sentiment or emotions toward the high intensity of that seen among *Qallunaat*. Open and public expression of romantic sentiment was now apparent in the settlements, which included hand-holding, public kissing, and animated discussion. This was especially apparent during Saturday night drinking in the larger towns, where this sentiment would be loud regarding both affection and anger between couples. In the 1960s among the Inupiat, Burch (1975) found alcohol intoxication to be associated with problems between couples in the form of expressed anger and hostility, including physical violence and wife-beating. Burch appears to have defined romantic love in a very North American *Qallunaat* sense, which did not address more current universal notions such as Sternberg's (1986) theory of love centred on combinations of affection-closeness, sexual attraction, and commitment. Nevertheless, he described a very North American *Qallunaat* love as the new behavioural manifestation among Inupiat couples.

Condon (1988) found a similar effect of television on teenage dating practices in Holman. Prior to the introduction of TV in 1980, “dating” was covert. Boys and girls were rarely together in public, even if dating and even at community dances. Dating partners would meet alone at one of their houses, or in the summer in a private space somewhere. After 1980, “dating” became publicly performative. Couples would hold hands and hug in public, and be together at community dances. Publicly displayed affection between middle-aged couples was also on the rise, including holding hands and kissing each other goodbye when one left for work. Young couples would sleep at each others’ homes with their parents’ permission, and make public the permanence of their relationship. None of this was evident prior to 1980 and television. Premarital pregnancy was now common, and couples would then usually set up a household together although they spent much of the first year or two together between their natal households. Anglican missionaries were actively opposed to couples having sex before marriage, and this was ignored. Parents were not against their children having premarital sex as much as they were against their having a great many sexual partners. Extramarital sex was also more common among younger Inuit.

Brody (1991 [1975]) noticed some changes in Inuit adolescent/youth romance a decade before Condon, in the early 1970s. He reported the romance among young Inuit to be hollow. “There is little to share beyond mutual attraction and acute feeling,” wrote Brody, “and there is, therefore, little to sustain the relationship. The pattern is very like that in the south: couples who have been profoundly emotional in their attachment suddenly end it. But in the north, this back-and-forth of shifting affairs takes place in an

atmosphere heavily charged with powerful, desperate feelings. In such an atmosphere, the eruption of anger and morbidness is commonplace” (232-233).

Along with a new model of romantic love came a shift in sexual practices and the emotions associated with them. The number of sexual partners appears to have increased substantially, however the emotions of jealousy and anger became much more prevalent in these relationships. Burch (1975) found that among the Inupiat in the 1960s, the meaning of infidelity leading to jealousy and anger changed from having sex with someone other than your partner without their permission to merely having sex with anyone else. He thought that this shift to publicly sanctioned monogamous sexuality actually increased such sexual behaviour. This has been found elsewhere including among Australian Aborigines, where sexual jealousy is higher in monogamous communities (Cowan 1992). Burch reported that prior to the 1960s, jealousy was common in marriage. Others disagree, and this may be area-related although interpretive discrepancies may also be due to what is called method variance, in this case differences in how jealousy was assessed. While jealousy was common pre-contact among couples who had sex with another person without permission, and was a major reason for homicide when it took place (Balikci 1970: 179), in the 1970s and early 1980s there was apparently relatively little of this in Nunavut (Hugh Brody 2002, personal communication; Condon 1988). Yet tension between the sexes was increasing by the end of this time period. Condon (1988: 143) thought such tension was primarily due to boys having greater freedom and “parental indulgence,” however a sexual tension also became apparent.

The most common marital strain after 1960 was infidelity. Although it was allegedly very common in more traditional times, it was also acknowledged by all parties involved in order to avoid conflict. By the 1960s, spouse exchange was both underground and taking place only among older couples (Burch 1975). Burch (1975) found that the most common sources of marital strain were in the order of jealousy, not fulfilling economic expectations, and child-rearing. He saw relationships among younger couples as more problematic than those of older couples, describing them as volatile. Emotional expression was traditionally highly structured (Damas 1972), and the work of Briggs (1970) indicated that its expression, particularly anything negative, was highly constrained. The traditional means of resolving tension between Inuit was by withdrawal (Damas 1963). Yet Burch (1975) found that the expression of emotions was being much influenced among Inupiat by *Qallunaat* by the 1960s, as younger Inuit were emulating *Qallunaat* role models. Anger was becoming a prevalent and expressed emotion between younger couples.

O'Neil (1983) also found young Inuit men to be angry with young Inuit women. He learned from informants that this anger was largely because of the young women being interested in *Qallunat* men and values. This is similar to earlier reports by Brody (1991 [1975]), Graburn (1969), and McElroy (1975). Inuit women were becoming more interested in Inuit men in the settlements, the Kabloonamiut, as discussed earlier. But the status and pride of the traditional male role of being a good hunter, the mark of a good husband, was on the wane.

In the early 1980s, youth suicides began to increase, marking the beginning of the current youth suicide epidemic. Condon (1988) attributed a higher suicide rate to

communities that were less well integrated socially, and these were usually the more populated ones. O'Neil (1983) found most suicides to be taking place in the highly populated Frobisher Bay, and believed this was due to ostracism of youth by the community. In a recent study of Inuit youth suicide, I found that most suicides were immediately preceded by romantic relationship problems (Kral 2003). Jealousy and anger were prominent in the recent histories of these suicides, and in many cases suicide appeared to be a form of revenge. Suicide has become an idiom of distress for Inuit youth that is now largely centred on romantic/sexual relations. Most suicides are by males, and they appear to be tied in part to a continuation of their anger toward women. I believe this to be related to changing gender roles, especially among men.

In the next chapter, the lives of Inuit male youth will be examined in some detail. The cultural model of love and sexuality among youth is highly strained, and changes in family relationships have contributed to youth feeling alone. Many youth are lacking in healthy Inuit role models for sexuality, romantic love, and marriage. There appears to be a connection between current youth suicide, violence against female partners/spouses, and earlier changes in marital practices and sexuality. What Graburn (1964, 1969) called "the marriage problem" has accelerated a generation or more later into a crisis.

Are Inuit male youth who do not hunt considered to be "real men" by themselves, by their families, by their male peers, by their female peers? Or as "real Inuit"? Is this still important to youth?

## Remaining Questions

Returning to Wenzel's (2001) dialectic of culture change, where the loss, continuity, and construction of cultural forms all takes place in concert over time, we pause here to take account of changes of deep concern to Inuit that may flame some of the central social problems of Inuit life in Nunavut. There should remain little doubt that much cultural continuity persists, including meat-sharing, differentiated gender roles, life course expectations, the namesake, and much other *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (Wilman 2002). There has also been some loss, certainly a diminishing, of numerous cultural beliefs and practices. I proposed several hypotheses in the first pages of this thesis that I believe need to be investigated to account for social distress in Nunavut, particularly among youth and particularly concerning the youth suicide epidemic. They centred on changes in *naalaqtuq-ungayuq*, gender roles, and the coherence of kinship ties, especially concerning intergenerational relations.

Colonialism needs to be understood over time in order to determine its effects, and for Nunavut I suggest that one must look at this over at least three generations. Colonialism needs to be understood as a multi-generational phenomenon. The changes in Inuit relatedness have had, and continue to have, an unfolding pattern over time. The anger between young couples seen over 20 years ago by O'Neil (1983) and Condon (1988) seems not to have diminished, and has been made worse by alcohol-induced violence and mimetic suicide. Anger is now being enacted forcefully. Graburn's noticing of youth being confused about courting behaviours and no longer having their parents as role models has been worsened through the acceleration of a new horizontal family

pattern among Inuit. Inuit culture is continuing with political control focusing on such continuity, but all is not well.

Inuit are beginning to address these weighty social problems collectively. In 2004, a partnership was formed of many Inuit agencies and several Nunavut government departments to form the Embrace Life Council. This Council is based, in large part, on the recent *Inungni Sapujjijiit* (“our words are coming back to us”) (2003) report by Inuit on suicide prevention. It urges Inuit to take ownership of this problem at the community level. The report highlights taking care of Inuit youth, who Inuit see as having “two very different ways of living” (10). In my work I have also had Inuit youth tell me about their living in two disparate worlds, that of Inuit and *Qallunaat* (Kral 2003). The *Inungni Sapujjijiit* report also stresses the importance of families working together across generations especially in the care of their children, and for Inuit in communities to cooperate and work together for their own wellness.

Autonomy is at its base the experience of being in control. Colonialism in Nunavut has been the taking and giving of much control, from Inuit to *Qallunaat*. Yet the autonomy and control of most concern in this thesis is that which takes place in the details of Inuit affiliation and relatedness. The social perturbation and suicide pertains to autonomy within kin and sexual relations, and it concerns the hopes and expectations of love. It is an autonomy of the individual and of the collective, and concerns the relation between the two. What are the models of love among Inuit across the age span today? How have they changed for youth? What are Inuit youth’s hopes and expectations, and how are they being realized or shattered? Inuit Youth Committees in many Nunavut communities are increasingly organizing activities for youth and elders to come together,

and for youth to learn from elders. What are the challenges to these actions, and what are the effects of this renewed relationship for both youth and elders? What are the effects for the communities? Some of these questions will be explored in chapter six. Within and across relationships, how are *naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq* being experienced and practiced, and how are they associated in practice? A more detailed investigation of these matters will, I trust, assist in not only the understanding but in the remediation of suicide and related predicaments in Nunavut. Such matters are and have been at the heart of Inuit life, and it is here, rather than in more peripheral and non-Inuit directions, that the words of Inuit will come back to them.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **“The Weight on Our Shoulders is Too Much, and We Are Falling”:**

#### **Suicide and Culture Change among Inuit Male Youth**

The suicide rate among Inuit in Arctic Canada is among the highest globally. Unlike suicides among Whites in North America, where elderly males have one of the highest rates, the median age for suicide among Nunavummiut is 20 and continues to get younger. Suicide among elderly Indigenous North Americans is rare. Data from the Chief Coroner of Nunavut, Canada, indicate that from 1995-2005, the suicide rate per 100,000 ages 24 and under in Canada for males was 22.4, while for Nunavut it was 184.6. For females these figures are 4.5 and 55.0, respectively. The suicide rate for Inuit youth in Nunavut is thus ten times the national rate. Males make up the majority of suicides, as is the case in most of the world. This chapter will focus on the problem of male youth suicide in particular in Nunavut, centred on the community of Igloolik.

Much research has been conducted on suicide among Indigenous Arctic peoples, however like most suicide research it is largely a compilation of correlations between suicidal ideation and variables such as substance abuse, sexual abuse, depression, and related factors. While informative, a larger picture of causality or understanding does not emerge. Most people who manifest multiple identified suicide risk factors do not kill themselves. In this chapter, Inuit male suicide in Nunavut is presented from the perspective of life experiences related to suicide, and recent cultural/colonial history and family change. Igloolik is known as one of the most culturally traditional communities in Nunavut. One of my research questions was about the relationship between suicide and romantic/sexual relations among youth or changes in family dynamics, given the

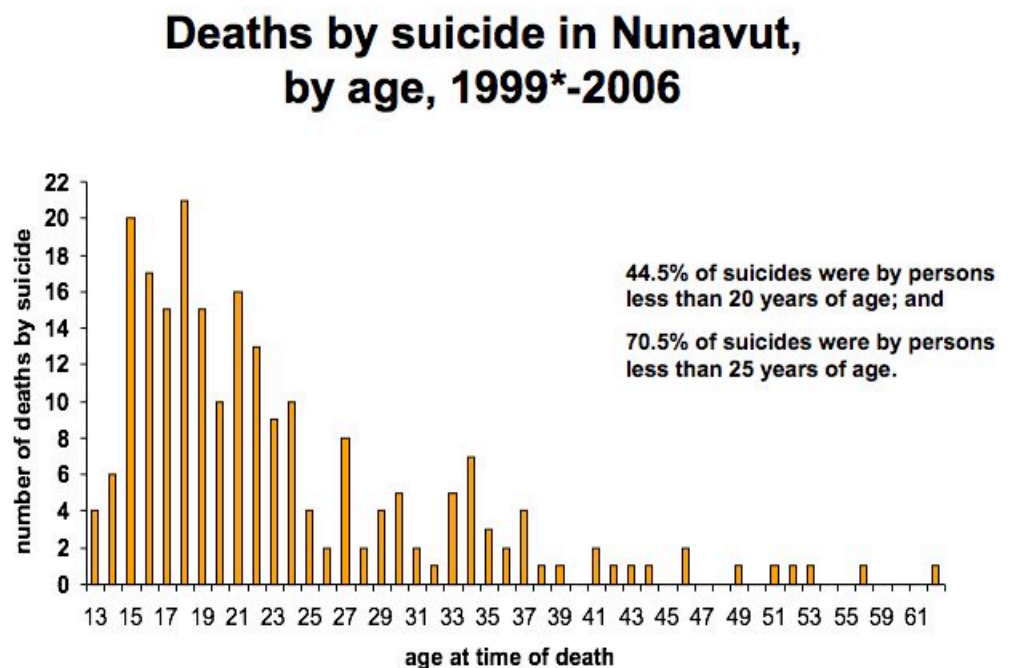
relationships found among these factors (Kral 2003). There are a great many positive qualities to Inuit life. They are a wonderful people. This chapter, however, describes an underside of colonialism, another window through which to see the suicide problem in the Canadian Arctic.

## **A Background**

Suicide rates are elevated for Inuit youth across the circumpolar north, from the Eveny in Siberia (Vitebsky 2006) to Yup'ik and Inupiat in Alaska (Bjerregaard, Young, Dewailly, & Ebbeson 2004; Wexler, Hill, Bertone-Johnson, & Fenaughty 2008), to Inuit in Canada (Kirmayer, Fletcher, & Boothroyd 1998) and Greenland (Bjerregaard & Lyne 2006; Leineweber, Bjerregaard, Baerveldt, & Voestermans 2001). Different populations of Inuit have experienced colonialism/imperialism from different governments, particularly since the 1950s, which has significantly dislocated their major forms of social organization. The suicide rate began to climb in Nunavut in the mid-1980s, as seen in Figure 1 in chapter one. Figure 3 shows the youthfulness of the suicide problem. The rates across the communities in Nunavut vary dramatically, and some communities have no suicides at all. Igloolik is in the middle of this range, and a decade ago it had one of the lowest suicide rates in the Canadian Arctic. Each living generation of Inuit today has experienced a very different life from each other. The elders have lived more traditionally on the land before coming to the settlements as adults and most do not speak English, while their children were placed in schools that often did not allow and even punished traditional practices including speaking their native language of Inuktitut. Abuse took place in the residential schools. Many of these children grew up not having learned

parenting skills from their parents, as adults sometimes abusing alcohol and resorting to violence in the home. Their children, the youth of today, are killing themselves in large numbers. Family life, a core of Inuit identity, has been changing dramatically over the last four decades.

**Figure 3. Death by Suicide in Nunavut by Age, 1999-2006**



Graph courtesy of Jack Hicks.

\* April 1, 1999

The family has been the foundation of Inuit social life and central to Inuit traditional knowledge (Boas 1964/1888; Bodenhorn 2000; Briggs 1994; Damas 1968; Saagiaqtuq, Pitseolak, Juralak, Nowdlak, & Erkidjuk 2001). This is so for Indigenous peoples in North America more generally, for whom rules of behavior have traditionally

been determined by the kinship system (DeMallie 1998; Eggan 1955; Miller 2002), what Eggan (1950) called their “index” of social structure. It is what Steward (1955) referred to as the family level of integration in the social organization of cultures, with a family-based functional interdependency. Jean Briggs (1970) reported that kin pervade the thoughts and even dreams of Inuit. Inuit dreams, recorded by missionaries in the earlier part of the 20th century, included themes of fear of loss of family should they not convert to Christianity (Richling 1989). Almost all of the members of one’s social world were kin (Heinrich 1963).

Cross-generational relationships have been critical for Inuit, and “child attitude of respect for parents was paramount” while grandparents were seen as “the primary repositories of wisdom and knowledge” (Burch 1975, p. 155). Collings (1999) referred to elders as having traditionally been at the nexus of Inuit social relations, and described an educational function as perhaps their most important social role. Elders have been exemplars as well as sources of knowledge. The elders’ word, according to Inuit author Joe Otokiak (2004, p. 69), President of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, “was the unwritten law.” The male sibling group was very important for ties within the local group. Sibling relationships involved much economic sharing, with older siblings having authority over younger ones. The most loyalty was seen between brothers, with the strength of sibling relationships being second to the parent-child relationship (Burch 1975). Inuit children learned most of their knowledge and skills by observing and interacting with their parents, which they then passed down to their own children. Family male heads who were not kin to each other were *nulliq* (emotionally and economically reciprocal), and the extended family was the basic economic unit. Kin terms were used as

forms of address for descending generations (grandparent-child-grandchild), with some variation for affinal terms and even more for ascending generations. Some variability existed for the use of kin terms, but they were used consistently across Nunavut and there was much overlap among them (Damas 1963; Maxwell 1986).

Marriage was typically arranged by the parents of a couple or elders, often at birth, and helped solidify relations between families (Giffen 1930). There was no marriage ritual or ceremony, and a couple was considered more permanently bonded after the birth of their first child and usually stayed together if they had children. Girls married at age 14-15, and boys around age 20 after a long apprenticeship of having learned to be a skilful hunter (Balikci 1970). Damas (1963) described a virilocal arrangement, the new couple moving in with the husband's family, in about two thirds of Iglulingmiut marriages, with the others being either matri-patrilocal or matrilocal. Kjellström (1973) called Iglulingmiut marriages primarily bilocal, where couples alternate between the wife's or husband's families, with a trend toward the virilocal. Some polygyny was practiced, but polyandry was much less common. Marital partners were highly interdependent (Brody 1991 [1975]). "The marital unit was the basic collaborative unit in Netsilik society," wrote Balikci (1970: 103). Sex roles tended to be highly differentiated yet interdependent. Some women occasionally hunted and some men occasionally made or repaired clothing. The woman's work was primarily around the home, preparing food, making skin clothing, and arranging the interior of the skin tent or sod/snow house. The man was the hunter, toolmaker, and he constructed dwellings and the *qamuti* (sledge) (Giffen 1930). If the couple split up, children typically stayed with the mother. "Remarriage" was not uncommon, and was expected after a spouse's death or in the

absence of children. Brief spouse exchange was a common practice or ritual across the Arctic, “sustaining a widespread network of relational ties” (Guemple 1961: 5). These exchanges took place across trading partners, joking friends, song-cousins, relatives, and other friends (Kjellström 1973). Divorce was neither traumatic nor complete as ties, responsibilities, sexuality, and kin terms continued, all socially condoned. Children of future spouses were considered related (Heinrich 1972).

A note must be added about suicide before the settlement or government period. Boas [1888] (1964) and others wrote about suicides taking place some time ago, although there was little if any detail about them. Rasmussen (1929) described a suicide in Igloolik in the early 1920s where an elderly woman was suffering from illness and was choked by a family member by a cord around her neck. He wrote of another suicide where a man died while hunting on his kayak, and his mother, being old and apparently without relatives, cut a hole in the ice and drowned herself to be with her son. Violent deaths, including suicide, were said to have a “purifying effect” and victims went to an even better place after death (Rasmussen 1929: 96).

Suicide among Inuit traditionally may have been a form of Durkheim’s altruistic suicide, where the reason for and motivation behind it is to benefit others. While there is little direct evidence of this, I have heard stories from older Inuit that support this interpretation. Malaurie (2007: 137) discussed euthanasia among elderly Inuit as dying with “ancient dignity,” and in the 1860s Hall encountered a case where an Inuit elder who was very ill and dying asked to be put to death by stabbing or the arrow, and whereas Hall tried to dissuade him from this the elder was hanged by his son (Nourse 1879). Another case was described by Hall of an ill woman left to die (Loomis (1971). Kellehear

(2007: 34) cites only Fraser (1911) but states that forms of sanctioned killing including “voluntary suicide” and “mercy killing” among elderly existed among hunter-gatherers in different cultures over a long period of time.

Durkheim believed that suicide was a function of society not providing a sense of belonging/attachment and social regulation, which has been attributed to Aboriginal suicide (Carstens 2000). The belief that one is a burden on others is common among completed suicides more generally, and killing oneself might be in part to relieve others of this burden (Joiner 2005), contemporary suicides are not altruistic but usually egoistic à la Durkheim where one has a low level of connection with others, and include what would today be called psychiatric to include self-loathing and depression. Traditionally, Inuit suicides were typically an elder who was likely ill, often during a time of famine when hunting was poor for the benefit of the family. “It was about life, to give life to the rest of the family,” expressed a male, middle-aged community leader. I heard stories of elders in the past asking family members to kill them after long discussions, or of leaving the camp alone on a cold winter night and freezing on the land. The last suicide of this kind in Igloolik took place around 1973. A colleague and friend, a woman in her mid-50s, talked about her grandfather being the last “traditional” suicide in the community. He had requested to die and was given a 22 caliber rifle. She said he shot himself perhaps four times in the head, with the help of two of his sons. The two men were charged with homicide, however she indicated that the charges were eventually dropped because it became evident that this was a traditional custom. Assisted suicide is otherwise a federal offence in Canada.

## **Culture Change**

Family is being replaced by new patterns of community, and among Inuit the most profound changes in the last few decades have been reported in gender roles and female status rising, the marital relationship, and parent-child relations (Klausner & Foulks 1982). Gender role change and resultant conflict are common among colonized Indigenous peoples (Gregor & Tuzin 2001; Stolen & Vaa 1991; Tuzin 1997). The process of colonization disrupted the traditional gender order and masculinities, from the introduction of individualism to changing economies, and much of this remains to be documented (Connell, 2000). Gender role continuity among Inuit has held more for females than males, becoming more unstable for males by the late 1960s with boys perceiving themselves less like adult men than girls did of adult women (Condon & Stern 1993, McElroy 1975). Hunting was the dominant male role and hunting has diminished, opening the question of roles today for male youth. Indeed, the words “man” and “hunter” in Inuktitut are derivative of each other. Gender role change comes today from many corners, and masculinity has changed. A global masculinity described by Connell (2000) includes egocentrism, conditional loyalties, and a diminishing responsibility to others. The focus away from the collective, including family, would be most noticeable in Nunavut.

Following the government era of crowded settlements, Inuit youth began to manifest problems. This was the first time a very large number of Inuit children began to grow up together. Brody (1991/1975) found that gender role strain became one of the most significant sources of stress. Already by the late 1950s, Graburn (1969) found



couples starting to choose each other as partners. They asked their parents for permission, yet over a third of the parents were refusing. Again, by the 1960s, spouse exchange was both underground and taking place primarily among only older couples (Burch, 1975). In Igloolik in 1960, arranged marriage was still being practiced but some of the children were beginning to refuse these marriages (Maurie, 2007). During his ethnographic work in the early 1980s in Nunavut, O'Neil (1993: 259) found conflict concerning arranged versus chosen marital partners. He saw that "relations between the sexes are highly charged emotionally and tremendously meaningful to Inuit men and women," showing highly intense sentiment among young couples. O'Neil (1993: 261) noted that "teenage promiscuity has to some extent, unfortunately, replaced spouse exchange as the new stereotype of Inuit sexuality," and found that young Inuit males were particularly angry with women their own age. Increasingly, physical fighting among couples took place during alcohol intoxication. Historically, however, male aggression was not condoned (McElroy 1972). Inuit male autonomy was downgraded by the *Qallunat* northern service officers and employers. Autonomy from parents among teenagers increased as the adolescent peer group developed as a new, powerful form of culture. After TV was introduced in one Inuit community in 1980, where "Happy Days" was the most popular show among youth, Condon (1988: 150) found that sexuality became public through hand-holding, hugging, and kissing, where "in all probability, these new forms of dating and emotional expressiveness were acquired by watching these new forms of entertainment." Prior to this boys and girls were rarely seen together in public, and now love became the sole criterion for marriage.

Iglulingmiut had a similar experience with television after it arrived in 1983. One woman in her mid-fifties found that, before TV arrived, her children would help their parents in traditional ways. The girls would help her with sewing and the boys would go hunting with their father. “TV comes, the boys don’t want to go out with the father anymore, and the girls don’t want to help with the mother. Because they’d rather watch TV. They could say no, and they could talk back now.” A middle-aged man said that “most people stopped visiting each other and stayed home watching TV non-stop. It changed everything.” Television decreased visiting, referred to as *pulaarniq* or as elder Martha Angugattiaq called it *uklaqqariktug*, a common practice among Inuit, and many Inuit indicated that people started speaking less with each other. Television affected children’s behavior in that they had played together outside before its arrival, but after TV was in almost every household this outdoor playing almost stopped. One man, age 54, reported that “Nobody played outside anymore. They were stuck to their TVs. I think people are being very heavily influenced by television.” A man in his late 20s told me that he was seven years old when TV arrived, and remembered that he and other children stopped playing outside. “It happened overnight. We used to play outside all the time.” He also noticed that fighting among children increased, documented by Condon (1995) as increasing even during sports during the 1980s. One woman, age 55, noticed some changes in couple behavior after television arrived. She said that boys and girls “were more intimate, and less shy of showing it, like in a public area. I would have never held a guy’s hand [in public]. It’s ok now.”

Television thus also influenced Iglulingmiut regarding romantic love. Euro-American marriage and romance is not based on the creation of social alliance but “to

make individuals happy and fulfilled... based on mutual attraction, affection, and emotional commitment” (Stone 2000: 232). The Western form of the small nuclear family as the central economic unit existed prior to the nineteenth century. Stone (2000) notes that there has long existed in Western and some non-Western marriages a sexual double standard, and Christianity affirmed a subordination of wives to husbands. The American model of love has been described by Swidler (2001) as based on a culture of voluntarist individualism, where one is in control of selecting one’s social relationships, and “how individuals choose” is the most common narrative. The American culture of love comes with expectations of stable, monogamous relationships. For Inuit, individualism thus begins to conflict with the central importance of kin and community. This American model begins in youth: about half of American 15-year-olds today are already involved in a romantic relationship (Florsheim 2003). Graburn (1964) saw that over 40 years ago Inuit youth were already left confused and without parental or cultural models for sexuality and marriage. Sexual/couple relations among Inuit are thus a notable form of cultural discontinuity, whereas other forms of culture have continued to maintain much importance including the centrality of family, respect for elders, sharing food, and traditional practices such as hunting, making clothes from animal skins, and knowing the land. But these practices are declining among Inuit youth.

### **Marijuana and Alcohol**

Many Indigenous suicidal youth are involved in the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. In Igloolik, I saw some alcohol abuse among youth in Igloolik but very little. An Inuk male in his mid-40s said that he thought alcohol use was low in the community, but

it had been bad years ago. An RCMP officer repeated this opinion. Another middle-aged man said that alcohol use was very low in the community but a few families have serious problems with it. One late Friday afternoon I was leaving the government blue building as the cleaning staff were coming in, two elders and two middle-aged woman. We spoke for a while as we often did. The younger women asked me what I was doing over the weekend and I told her that I was planning to borrow a snow machine and go to Avajja, a nearby hilly site where a great many *Tuniit* artifacts have been found. I asked her the same question, and she said she had a big hangover and had “started the weekend early.” Another younger Inuk male who I befriended, a very talented community artist, told me one time that he had not been creating his art for the last week because of a drinking binge and terrible hangover. Thus while there is virtually no public drunkenness, it does take place privately. Marijuana is the community drug, and most Inuit told me most community members smoke it regularly. The psychiatric nurse said there was some crack cocaine in the community, as did the RCMP, but the primary drug is marijuana.

A number of Inuit told me that they had never heard of any harder drugs than marijuana in the community. One carver in his early 30s indicated that he had lived in Iqaluit for seven years and was drinking there. “Too much booze there,” he said. When I asked him about alcohol in Igloolik, he replied, “Not so much. Its easy to get it from bootleggers,” and reported that the price of alcohol from bootleggers is very high, about \$120 for a 20-ounce bottle of otherwise cheap whisky. The problem with marijuana appears first to be its cost. One joint is \$30, and I heard that it is often mixed with other things, diffused for profit. Many Inuit spoke of money in terms of the price of marijuana. Carvers often sold their art in \$30 segments. One Inuk man talked about purchasing the

new community wireless network, which he said cost a lot at \$60. “That’s the price of two joints,” he indicated. According to an article by Greg Younger in the *Nunatsiaq News*, all but one of the 382 drug charges in Nunavut by the RCMP in 2004 were for marijuana, and most were for trafficking. These charges were up from 308 in 2003. A number of Inuit males informed me that they had sold marijuana for a short period to make money. A great deal of money could be made this way. One Inuk, one of the community’s best carvers, said that he gets dope cheaper than the going rate, and that he used to be a dealer. “Selling dope,” he said, “can earn you \$50,000 in two or three weeks. A pound can get you a lot of money.” He stopped dealing because he did not want to be caught by the RCMP. Another Inuk, a woman in her 30s, told me she had been a dealer and had made \$120,000 in one month. She was never arrested and was never approached by the RCMP. She spoke about how dope dealing worked there. She never had to pay up front for anything, and made 50% on sales and was able to keep eight ounces for herself. Our conversation was interrupted by her phone ringing, and when she hung up she said it was her cousin asking if she had visited her grandmother today yet. I asked her about visiting, and she replied that she visits her grandmother every day. Thus one sees strong traditional family ties, elder respect, and in many cases and the influx of southern drug crime. One RCMP officer indicated to me that he believed ninety five percent of Inuit in Igloolik smoke marijuana. He said that he was “amazed” by this. “Nobody here thinks it is a problem, because everyone smokes.” Yet many Inuit talk about the problem of marijuana being that it eats up everyone’s money. The officer said that a year ago they did a bust in Igloolik and found a half million dollars worth. During my year in Igloolik, four Inuit asked me, one of them persistently, if I would arrange for marijuana to be

shipped via the post office to the community for them to sell. I was an outsider *Qallunaat*, and my parcels at the post office would not likely be suspicious. They told me that the RCMP have no dogs here, and that the postal service was the easiest way to ship the drug.

Many young Inuit were often stoned in the evenings when I saw them. On one typical evening I went to an Inuit friend's house. He was sitting on his sofa and smiled at me, saying "We're burned out. Too much marijuana!" On another occasion, a Sunday afternoon, I was at the house of another Inuk in his 40s. His girlfriend and father of their 20-year-old son had left the day before for Ottawa and had broken up with him, leaving their family for the time being. He and his son were smoking marijuana together, which his son had prepared. The TV was on, and we watched it together. Families smoking marijuana together is not uncommon. One Inuk friend in his late 20s told me that his parents had come over to his house where he, his girlfriend, and his parents smoked up together in the living room. I asked him what it was like to smoke with his parents, and he replied that was "strange." He thought his father was looking at him strangely the first time he smoked up with his parents. His father had not seen him smoke marijuana before, but he had seen his father do this for years.

A young man in his late 20s talked to me about the youth rebelling against their parents' alcohol abuse in the mid to late 1980s, and how a number of them burned down a small building in the community in protest, one that was called the community museum. He reported that they did this because of their parents "always being drunk." They had wanted to destroy something their parents valued. The young man said that this fire and those who did it were never really talked about in the community but that the

message was very clear. "They knew," he said with some pride. He indicated that he thought drinking alcohol slowed down quite a lot after that even though it continued into the 1990s. He said that drinking is "very low" today, and that he does not like alcohol. Another male youth had told me that this community is "almost dry," while 80% smoke marijuana. He added that there is no alcohol at the teen dances but much marijuana. My late 20s friend said that his parents drank a lot in the past, and have been smoking marijuana on a regular basis since the 1970s. He added that his mother asked him to get her some dope the other day.

One evening I was with the Youth Society members in my bunkhouse, where they were having one of their weekly meetings. Toward the end of our meeting at the bunkhouse, one young woman picked up a very small ceramic bowl on a side table and asked what it was for. I opened a drawer and showed her a packet of incense, saying that someone gave this to me for Xmas. I put a cone in the bowl and she lit it. None of these youth had ever seen this sort of incense before, and I told her when to blow out the flame. I made a joke and said that it goes with Visene for red eyes to hide marijuana use. One of the male youth then said that he would not use incense to hide the smell of marijuana, and the woman laughed and said that she would. She then asked me if I smoke dope. I said no, and then she asked if I had ever smoked dope. All the youth were now looking at me with great interest. I told them that I had smoked it before, a long time ago. "Why did you stop?," she asked. I paused, looked around at all of them, and told them I stopped because I wanted to be more awake. Another male youth, the one who had the most respect of his peers, nodded and said that that was why he does not smoke. We talked about this for another minute or so, and the first young man, who was lying on the floor, said that

"stopping would be like suicide." It was obvious to everyone that he was quite stoned. He repeated this. He then said that he was going to appear in court in two months for dealing. He was smiling when he said this, and added that he was still selling because he still had a lot of dope. "You can make a lot of money," he noted. I asked him if this was the first time he had been busted, and he responded yes. I thought to myself that I need to talk to him about this, and look into his mentioning suicide in the context of quitting marijuana and having a pending court appearance. One in five youth have such an upcoming court appearance preceding their suicides (Kral 2003). Suicide comes up among youth often when they speak of something upsetting. It has become a cultural referent in such contexts. An option that has become normative discourse.

I did speak later with this young man who had arrived stoned at the Youth Society meeting. He was not suicidal, and I was relieved. He admitted that he was waiting for court for a drug dealing charge and expected to be sentenced to do time, he thought three years, in Baffin Correctional Centre (BCC) in Iqaluit for trafficking marijuana. He said he gets it for cheap and makes a lot of money. He now admitted to me that he had been in court before, which is why he expected to do time. He said that he was looking forward to it, to getting out of Igloolik for a while. He said he can do weights in jail and get into good shape. I asked him if he knows the new Inuk warden there, the first Inuk warden at BCC, and he said that he "hates" that man. The warden is a retired RCMP officer who has worked in Igloolik, and I read in the newspaper that he was pretty tough and no-nonsense. It is curious that this young man would "want" to be in jail - "for only three years, only 900 days," given what he is doing with and for the Youth Society. I saw him as one of the youth leaders. I suggested that if the judge sees what he's been doing, he



might get a break. The young man thought not. These are the two sides I've seen of him, being highly responsible with the Society and then showing up very stoned at a meeting.

I asked many youth why they wanted to smoke dope. One young Inuk who I had made friends with told me that while he thought some youth were addicted to the drug, many just want to experience the high. He talked about this being the reason he likes to smoke marijuana. He talked about having a craving for the high, and mentioned that his cousin did not show as he was supposed to at his house the night before because he was looking for money to buy dope. A few Inuit youth told me they smoke to forget the past. Some young Inuit were motivated to stop smoking up, but had trouble doing so. A number of them believed they were physically addicted. One Inuk in his mid 30s told me that he had stopped smoking for the last four days and that this made him very happy. He said that he was now less grumpy with his family, and his brother told me that he thought he was looking better, even younger, over the last few days. The three of us were together and had had some food, and the brother who was trying to stop smoking dope did a great job of helping to clean the table. "See, I can even get things cleaned up a bit!" he exclaimed. By the next week, however, he was smoking dope again on a daily basis. His brother told me that his family runs out of food often because of his drug habit. I heard many cases of this in the community. One Inuk RCMP officer told me that she has been in houses where there is little food or furniture because all the money is being spent on marijuana. One may wonder whether youth being bored in Nunavut has anything to do with daily marijuana smoking, as there is some support for its frequent use created a somewhat "amotivational" state (Cherek, Lane, & Dougherty 2002, Lane, Cherek, Pietras, & Steinberg 2005).

Poverty is a problem in Igloolik, and by comparison to southern Canada living in Igloolik is very expensive. Yet the money spent in Igloolik is very high, on many items. I received from a very reliable source information on spending in this community of about 1,300 people. Between the Co-op and Northern stores, the only two general stores in the community, about \$700,000 a year is spent on soft drinks/pop, \$420,000 on gasoline, and, at \$14.00 a pack, 1.2 million dollars on cigarettes. Assuming half the population is in the later teens and adult, this is over \$1,800 per person per year. A large number of cigarettes are also mailed to Igloolik. Informally, I asked quite a number of Inuit how much they spend on marijuana compared to cigarettes, and the response was usually four or five times as much. Canadian Inuit now have the highest rate of lung cancer in the world (Alphonso 2008). Money is literally going up in smoke in this community, and it is a mystery to me where it comes from.

## **Suicide**

As noted, suicide continues to increase among youth in Nunavut. Kral (2003) reported that Inuit in Igloolik and another community who had themselves been suicidal attributed their most common reasons for considering or attempting suicide to be romantic problems related to breaking up or arguing. Inuit of all ages from the communities in this study more generally believed this to be true, so the relationship between suicide and romantic problems is well known among them. Romantic relationship problems were similarly recorded in the Deputy Chief Coroner's reports as the precipitating factor in 68% of suicides between 1981-1998 in the two Nunavut communities being investigated, including Igloolik. An additional 20% were precipitated

by waiting for court appearance, mostly for break-and-entry crimes by male youth. Inuit more generally spoke about suicide in terms of aloneness, romantic relationship problems, and family problems. Themes concerning aloneness were feeling unloved, rejected, shamed, hopeless and angry. Anger was prominent, and there were suggestions with some evidence that suicide was often a form of revenge. Suicide has become embedded in romantic relationships among Inuit youth.

A 55-year-old woman, working in the role of traditional counselor in the community and seeing many young people, spoke about hearing young women talk about their boyfriends making suicide threats. She said that a boyfriend would sometimes threaten, “If you leave me I’m going to kill myself.” This counselor added, “I’m even a little bit shocked sometimes by what I hear, you know, because it never happened to us.” She found that even parents were at times threatened by their sons in this way, often for not giving them more money. “Quite a lot of couples that are older than me, they live in fear of their violent behavior. Some of them are even afraid they might get killed. The money, you know.” Another traditional counselor, a woman in her mid-50s, said that some young men “get mad about something and right away they are saying, ‘Boring, I’m going to suicide. I’m really going to suicide for sure if you don’t do what I want.’ And they take their expression out.” An older woman described her problematic 17-year-old son to me. She saw him as being “always angry” and she was afraid that he might kill her. She has seen him looking from a doorway at her and her two younger daughters, which makes her nervous, and that he sometimes grabs his 5-year-old sister and throws her to the ground. He spends much of his time locked in his bedroom and refuses to go to school. He sleeps during the day and “paces around the house” at night. She was close to

tears speaking about him. “He sometimes punches a hole in the wall, and locks himself in his room and plays music very loud.” She said that all he wants from her is money. She recently found an extension cord tied into a noose hanging from his closet rod, which she took down and threw out and also threw out his tape recorder on which he was playing the loud music. She thought the music was having a bad influence on him, and asked me if music makes young people kill themselves. We spoke for some time, and she told me about her granddaughter who tells her about her boyfriend beating her up, who is afraid of speaking to anyone about it for fear of their taking his side. She said she had talked about it with the RCMP but they had done nothing, yet the officers told me they had a zero tolerance policy for violence against women. A middle-aged man I spoke with heard his son and girlfriend arguing, and then found his son hanging in his bedroom. He and his other son cut the rope and saved him.

During my fieldwork in Nunavut I heard young Inuit speak of their romantic relationships as being extremely important to them, yet often marked by jealousy, anger, and possessiveness. Possessiveness and control of romantic partners is now largely a male trait among youth. Inuit counselors told me that this is uncommon among female youth, as did some male youth.

Several times I too heard young Inuit say that they had threatened or had been threatened by their partner with suicide in the context of perceived unfaithfulness of that partner. One young Inuk woman in her early 20s told me emphatically that she is not interested in marrying anyone. This was because of her recent experience with a boyfriend who was threatening to kill himself. She said that she had cut him down once from the closet bar and that this was the end of their relationship. He had threatened her

with suicide if they would break up. “I’m not taking no more shit,” she said. We then took a small walk with an older Inuk woman who was a traditional counselor in the community. These two women were working together, and I told them that they were strong women. The older one agreed and said that this was not easy. She talked about a respected female elder in the community saying on the community radio that women who are beaten by their husbands or boyfriends must have deserved it. This older woman got right on the phone and spoke on the radio saying that the elder should not say such things, and told me that she likely said this because of her own past abuse. Sexual and physical abuse in childhood is a common understanding in the community, as is intimate partner violence toward women. I did not hear of violence associated with threats by male youth toward their girlfriends, in spite of such violence existing among older couples. In the south, dating violence has been identified in 10% of youth dating and is reportedly on the rise (Olson 2009). Pollack and Shuster (2001) find that the American cultural model of male youth includes being in control of girls, what they refer to as part of the “boy code.”

Burkhardt (2004) found that this violence was attributed to alcohol by both women and men, rather than to men being generally angry or to relationship problems. A woman in her early 30s disclosed, after I pointed out some bruising I noticed on her neck, that she had been in a fight with her boyfriend because of his jealousy. She said that in this last fight she had bitten him in the eyebrow, and he threatened to beat her up very badly. She said that they had been drunk, and that they always fight when they drink. She spoke about this in a matter-of-fact way, so I asked if she had had much experience like this with men. She replied that her ex-husband used to beat her and that he had twice threatened to kill her and then himself. I asked her why she thinks men are so angry at

women. Her answer was that men are angry that women are so successful in the community in getting good jobs. “Women get jobs and learn faster,” she added. She believed that men would rather have women stay at home. Her boyfriend told her in anger that women are “taking over the world, that they’re not very good.” I was working in the same building as this woman, and was aware that her boyfriend, a good carver, was taking many months to make the carving I had already paid him for. I asked if he was jealous of me, and she replied that he was but that he was jealous of any man she spoke with. But she noticed that he became very angry any time she mentioned my name, and that he does this whenever she mentions any man’s name. I eventually asked her boyfriend for my money, and he later returned it to me. His reason for not carving anything for me was that he was too busy, and I never spoke to him about his girlfriend. It was an uncomfortable situation for me, and I was nervous for a while. Of interest is that the psychiatric nurse told me that he found an increase over the past year of women coming into the Health Center for being assaulted. He said that many couples are fighting viciously, biting each other while drunk.

Sometimes these homicide-suicide threats are carried out. One Inuk female friend stopped by the bunkhouse one evening with her younger cousin, a woman who was about 18 years old. I made the usual tea for my friend, and hot chocolate for her cousin. I usually made hot chocolate for children who were visiting, and when I gave her the choice of tea or hot chocolate she chose the latter. Her cousin wanted to borrow \$20 because the government child payment was late and she said she wanted to buy some food for her daughter. I went ahead and gave her \$20, which she returned the next day. But this evening my friend told me that it was the anniversary of her cousin’s parents’

deaths. They had died together. I expressed sorrow, as this sounded very sad. My friend explained that her cousin's father had been very troubled. He had shot and killed her mother and then himself. This took place in Igloolik about fourteen years earlier. I had heard about this homicide-suicide, and now was learning more about it. At the time, this cousin had just moved to Igloolik with her parents from another community. She said that she had not been here when her parents died. My friend said that she had really liked her aunt, this cousin's deceased mother, and that she had been a very nice person. Then the two women started talking about the cousin needing to get her things from her boyfriend's place, as they had just broken up but her belongings were all still there. I asked if she had left him, and she replied that he left her. My friend said that she would go and get her things, because her cousin was afraid to do so. My friend indicated that she was also "creeped out" by him. Her cousin said that he had threatened to kill her, paralleling her mother's death. I suggested that they enlist the help of some men in the community, and they said they would consider this and left for the store that was still open to buy food for the cousin's little daughter.

So many youth have killed themselves following a breakup or fight with their boyfriend or girlfriend that it has likely become a motivational script for suicide. One of the ways culture has been described as "working" is by motivating people to do what they do, studying how "cultural messages get under people's skin" (Strauss 1992: 1, Munro, Schumaker & Carr 1997). One Inuit woman in her 30s I had befriended told me about a 15-year old girl who gave her a note about breaking up with her boyfriend and wanting to kill herself. One of the commonalities of suicide found in the south and elsewhere in the world is that its intent is usually communicated in some form

(Shneidman 1985). My friend said that she brought the girl to her house over the weekend that had just passed to help put up Christmas decorations and they had talked. She said that things went well and raised her eyebrows, and Inuit sign of the affirmative and positive. The psychiatric nurse in the community Health Centre said that about 12% of his caseload consisted of suicidal youth. He was also seeing adults in counseling, and I did not find out what portion of his youth clients were suicidal.

One 17-year-old Inuk male believed that young people “are growing up too fast up here. They’re taking adult responsibilities at such a young age.” This included having babies, where “they could be a kid and they’re already a parent.” This young man’s girlfriend was about to give birth to their first child. He talked about the rampant jealousy among youth, “because they’re too serious with their relationships.” Another male, age 18, felt that most of the love experienced by youth are from these romantic relationships rather than from their families. Role models for suicide persist, as he added, “I had an uncle who killed himself because his girlfriend broke up with him. They had children together. Maybe they feel lonely. Loneliness. The people who kill themselves never show any signs they want to do it.” Another male, age 19 and a student in grade 12, talked about anger among youth. “I can see some guys controlling their girlfriends, like I really don’t like what they do to their girlfriends, like controlling them.” I asked why he thought these boys want to control their girlfriends. “Maybe they try to control their girlfriends because they really want to be with that girl and don’t want to let go.” He said that they are afraid the girl will leave them, and the control is about “not wanting the girl to talk to any other guy other than the guy they’re with.” The anger was about jealousy and worry that the girl will “try to go for the other one.” A collective romantic insecurity appears to



have become common among many male youth. Social suffering takes place in an intersubjective, shared space (Kleinman 1998), and romantic jealousy among male youth is one such shared space. Neizen (2009) argues that suicide may indeed be a way of belonging in some Indigenous communities, and this might be the case for the particular male norm of control and possession of girlfriends. Suicide itself has become a norm (Kral 1994).

### **Prevailing Risks**

Family problems were another reason many youth and adults believed to be behind the suicides. One Inuk male, age 26, expressed “What I think is that whenever a person gets into a relationship, what I think, personally, is that they’re trying to get away from either parents or brothers and sisters. So they can have a calmer life. But then when they break up they have to go back to the violence at home. They have no other place to turn to. Maybe they’re not being taught about the other choices. Parents should take responsibility.” Another youth, age 18, talked about why he thought youth were angry. “I would say family problems. Parents arguing or fighting, and maybe not enough communication with your family, like talking about their problems. Youth, they just want to do things on their own.” Speaking about his own family, he stated, “They might be angry with their parents for what they said in the past. Like, ‘I hate you.’ I’ve had that, many times. And I’ve been told to kill myself several times [by my parents].” I spoke to one mother whose son killed himself after not being able to be with his girlfriend. This girlfriend’s father disapproved of their relationship and told her to stop seeing him. This woman told me with great sorrow that she had told her son during an argument he should kill himself. This woman had been significantly abusing alcohol, and had said this while

she was drunk. There are numerous examples of families doing well, and youth doing well, however too many cases are of this kind.

Many parents reiterated the sentiment of poor parent-child communication. A 55-year-old woman admitted that she and her husband have not spent much time with their children. “We don’t have time. We never sit down and talk to them about the facts of life. I don’t push them into listening to me when they don’t want to. They’re not so interested in what we have to say anymore.” Another woman of the same age said that the teachers took over from parents, and parents let the teachers do this by backing off. “When we were living in the camp, we knew exactly what to do because [parents] were always giving us instructions what to do. And we were doing it all the time, for our parents. And our behaviors were much controlled by our parents. In today’s day, teenagers don’t want to hear about the past. They don’t want to hear elders talking to them. They are saying, ‘We are living in today’s life now.’ If the younger people today would listen better to the adults, they would have a bit more understanding of where they had to go.” One woman, age 50 and known for speaking her mind, turned to parental responsibility.

“We always say that young people, they’re doing this and they’re doing that. It’s as if teenagers just materialized? Naa. It had started with the family. That’s what we have to deal with. It’s not the young people. It’s the parents who are not spending really much of any time with their children. We the parents should be apologizing or feeling remorseful for the things we have done to our children. Because we didn’t know any better. If we started doing that, the youth would be more stable. We the parents should be the ones to initiate that. Because our youth did not just make it up. It happened within families. There are some things that

happened within the family structure that affected them so. Of course we had problems too, but we have to acknowledge that to our children. The obstacles that we had to go through.”

This woman, for example, had been in residential school. It is interesting that a few other middle-aged women also spoke about apologizing to their children, as did the elder cited in the previous chapter. Even Elder Noah Piugattuk believed that “The blame must fall onto us as parents. Today, the parents are not training their children. Today you will see married women who still don’t have the know’how, they have now been taken over by *Qallunaat*. We the elders are to be blamed for the most part as we just let things happen, especially to those who do not have the know-how. Today when the influence has been taken over by the many *Qallunaat* in a community, we the elders seem to have the attitude of no longer caring as to what goes on around us” (Igloodik Oral History Project IE-070). Another young man in his mid-20s agreed that parents should take responsibility for their children. As a 46-year old man pointed out, “In our culture, its not right to be alone. You need to have family. That is, for Inuit, number one.”

Intergenerational segregation is another identified problem among colonized Indigenous peoples (Burbank 1988; Haebich 2000; Jolly & Macintyre 1989). Different generational memories hamper communication across age cohorts (Connerton 1989). By the early 1980s, Condon (1988) found that Inuit adolescents rarely spoke with their parents anymore. By the late 1990s, family change was of significant concern to Inuit, from teenagers to the elderly (Kral 2003). Young people are feeling “caught between two cultures,” and many middle-aged Inuit are unhappy about their having been taken from their families when they were children for schooling. Many elders wait, often alone, for

visitors who now only come infrequently. An Inuk man in his late 50s thought that “the closeness of the family is not there anymore.” He said that you used to know all your relatives, and now you don’t often even know your next of kin, attributing this to school and work.

In the late 1960s, the southern youth culture was also making its impact in Nunavut. A middle-aged man said that what his peer group created at that time was “almost a revolution. What happened here was this. There was a big group of young people living in the same community. They started getting together, and that’s when they started, I think that’s when the distancing from the elders started. Like almost paying less attention to the elders and paying more attention to our freedom. Honestly, it felt good to be among your own age group, doing your own thing. Lots of music, modern clothes, no more traditional clothes, long hair, new things. We started a movement, almost.”

After this man finished school he left for a large city in southern Canada for five years, and said that he brought southern youth culture back with him. “It was the era of Viet Nam.” His children’s generation continues this trend. A young man in his mid-20s talked about poor communication between the generations, saying, “Like generation gaps, those don’t go really well. It’s the same generation talking [to each other], so they have the same language, same views. So it’s easier to get the message across.” The creation of a youth peer group in Nunavut was a social movement, a new “teenage subculture” (Condon & Stern, 1993: 391), one that affected well-established lines of communication and education across generations. Schlegel (1995: 29) found that, across cultures, freedom from parental surveillance “extracts a heavy toll” on adolescents. For

Inuit culture, where cross-generational ties have been of such importance, this toll has been particularly severe.

One young Inuk, age 21, talked about his grandparents' generation's problems pressing down on his parents' generation, and these in turn pressing down on his generation. "The weight on our shoulders is too much, and we are falling" (for elders' concerns see Kral et al. 2000). A middle-aged woman said that her parents' generation "were directionless" once they came to the settlements. The young man above said that his generation of young people are unable to carry this cross-generational load any longer. Twelve of his friends had already killed themselves, and he had tried it himself on four occasions. He also spoke of often seeing his father beat his mother while he was growing up. Domestic violence is one form of response to colonialism that has been documented among Indigenous peoples, particularly men beating their female partners (Cowilshaw 2003; Harvey & Gow 1994; McClusky 2001). It appears that among Inuit in Nunavut, domestic violence began in earnest when the children of the mission/residential school era became adults in the 1970s and 1980s. The shoulder metaphor offered by my young Inuit friend deserves to be unpacked, investigated, and responded to.

### **Suicides in Igloolik**

One of the earlier "modern" suicides in Igloolik took place in 1982. A woman in her 50s described her husband's suicide. "My husband used to abuse me. He was beating me up." I asked if he was drinking, which is common today in such cases. "No, it was a dry community then, no alcohol," she replied. She spoke about how he used to threaten to kill himself. "He hit me with a stick. He knocked me out for a little bit, and I got up and

ran out. I went next door and called the RCMP. Before they got there he shot himself,” and described the sound of the gun. This woman then went on to say how she began drinking and how angry she was at her husband. She said that this went on for years. “*Uvangeruluk*; I am a bad person, I would say to myself.” Then I finally decided I have to be *kuluk*, special. She talked about *kuluk* as being a Christian religious experience for her, speaking with God and knowing he was looking after her, and that he had been looking after her children when she was unable. She is devout in her Christianity to this day. She described a time when she thought she was not a good mother and put a rope around her neck. Her cousin found her, took the rope away, and had a good talk with her. She said that she has now started talking with her grown children about her husband’s suicide.

I spoke with RCMP officers about suicides. They had four in 2004, the year this fieldwork began. One was a man who stabbed himself in front of RCMP officers. He had been having problems with his ex-spouse, who didn't want him back. He was referred to Social Services who were supposed to connect him up with an elder but didn't, and he killed himself that same night. The Social Services Director received a death threat and RCMP kept a watch on her for a week. She left for a short while also. On the night of this man’s death, the ex-wife called the RCMP from a neighbour's house – he was in her house. RCMP found him lying on a bed with two knives sticking into his chest, and he was digging a third knife into his heart area. The two officers wrestled with him. "He was very strong. We had a hard time with him. We finally punched him in the face twice, and he calmed down, saying "it hurts" (meaning the punches). They took him to the Health Centre but he died on the stairs as they were waiting for medical help to arrive. "They

didn't arrive soon enough." I learned later that this man had accidentally killed a young boy around April three years earlier. He had been driving a Co-op truck and the boy came out in front of the truck on his bicycle. He braked but the truck kept going. "He was never the same since that death," said the person who informed me of the accident. He added that the man did not outwardly blame himself for the death, but that it was obvious it had affected him deeply and very negatively. A second suicide was a male born in 1981 (age 23). He had a history of "mental problems," including multiple suicide threats and attempts. He used both marijuana and alcohol, and left suicide notes for his girlfriend and made a suicide note on video. His girlfriend had charged him with assault, and he was waiting for court. This young man hanged himself in the closet. The third suicide was a girl age 13. She had allegedly been sexually abused in Hall Beach when she was younger, where she had been living. Her parents were "major alcoholics." Her father was "the number one home-brew maker in the community," and both parents were "always drunk." The mother decided to leave the husband, and went to the women's shelter in Iqaluit. Then she went to Ottawa. Her husband followed her to Ottawa, where he beat her up. Meanwhile, the girl was in Igloolik and hanged herself in Igloolik in her school. I remember hearing that she was being looked after by her aunt, who was not home at the time of the girl's death. The fourth suicide was a man born in 1977 (age 27). He died by hanging in the closet, and was a rare case of being very drunk at the time. He had been a "nice guy" up to six months before his death. He then started with multiple assaults (women?), drinking, and general violence. His brother had committed two murders, one being the last one in Igloolik in 1983 of a younger girl. Another brother had killed himself. This young man had been working full-time at the Co-op, but was "hanging out

with a drinking crowd." RCMP were getting calls about him and alcohol. One of the officers I was with looked up suicide attempts and threats that were reported to the RCMP in Igloolik. In 2002 there were 24, in 2003 18, and in 2004 47. Of the 47 in 2004, 10 were about one person, a woman, who had a long history of making suicide threats.

I will describe a final suicide case in some detail, one that took place while I was living in Igloolik. On April 28 I phoned an Inuk friend, a middle-aged man who was involved with me helping the Youth Society, about scheduling two prominent elders for interviews. He sounded very subdued and serious, and told me about a suicide that happened the night before. He indicated that he was not especially close to the family, but hearing about the suicide made him burst into tears. "What is happening to our community?", he asked. The person who killed himself was a 16-year-old boy, the younger brother of a youth I was working closely with on the Youth Society. My friend said that when he heard about the suicide in this family, he thought it was one of the boy's brothers who he knew was not doing well. He was very surprised to learn that it was this boy. I asked this man if he wanted to come over for tea, but he said he was doing better. I phoned the RCMP and offered help in case any crises take place or anyone wants to talk, as I am a registered clinical psychologist (in Ontario). The officer I spoke with said that two Inuit counselors from Social Services have gone to the high school. I then met with a member of the Youth Society and with her planned to invite its members to the bunkhouse to talk about this after the funeral. I decided to go to Social Services, and stopped at the RCMP building on my way. An officer I knew there told me that the boy had shot himself, and that he had been in some trouble at school. He added that the



principal and vice-principal were quite stressed about the suicide. The officer added that the boy had left a suicide note for his girlfriend and another for his parents.

At Social Services, I spoke with the two counselors who had gone to the school earlier. One of them showed me the note the boy had written to his girlfriend. He had given it to her 11 days earlier and had dated it Sunday April 17, 2005. He had given it to his girlfriend on that day. The content of the note acknowledged his love for her, and also his despair. He wrote about “bullshit life” and “life is bullshit.” The note started with “Hi Babe!” and the second short sentence was about his loving her and saying goodbye. The third short sentence, on the same first line, read that “life is boring.” It was, from the overall content, a goodbye note. On the second or third line he wrote that he was “going to blast myself in the head.” At one point he wrote that his girlfriend should not kill herself and that she should think about her younger brother – he had been killed the year before by a Co-op truck when riding out in front of his bike; the driver had killed himself recently, as noted above. This made me wonder if she had been suicidal herself and had shared this with the boy. There were two references to God in the note. One was in the sentence about his girlfriend not killing herself, reading “God loves you,” and writing fieldnotes the next day I was unable to remember the other God reference but it was positive. There was some anger in the note, early on where the boy referred to a “fuckin ass nurse” who had told him not to kill himself a week before. At the bottom of the note was a huge “I L♥VE YOU,” with a heart filled in with ink that was the “o” in love. A section was marked out in heavy ink lines to cover something the boy had written. There was no blaming of anyone or anything in the note, which is often seen in suicide notes in the south, nor any direct blaming of self, which is also common in suicide notes. Some

ambivalence was seen, which is common in suicide (Shneidman 1985), in the repeated mentioning of his love for his girlfriend. The note was folded up to resemble a small envelope, and on the back the boy had written “I love you” and signed his first and last name.

This boy had shot himself in the afternoon, and his body was discovered in the evening. He was alone in the house at the time of death, however some of his family members were in the house later: his parents and two younger siblings. They were used to his staying in his room with the door closed, so nobody went to see him and they assumed he was in his room as usual. His girlfriend had been checking on him for some time, especially since he had given her the suicide note a week earlier. One of the traditional counselors, who knew his girlfriend, told me that this girlfriend had recently taken the boy’s 22-caliber bullets and threw them in a hole in his wall he had likely punched in. She had arrived at his house that evening and asked his brother if he was in. The brother replied yes and pointed to the bedroom door next to the front door. She tried the door but it was locked. She knew that her boyfriend used to lock himself in his room by sticking a butter knife into the side of the door. She knocked on the door, and after there was no answer she went outside to look into his window. She could not see very much and began knocking on the window. She went back into the house and with force pushed the door in. The boy’s body was sitting upright in a chair, head leaning over, with a short rifle on his lap up against his chest. She touched his arm and it was cold, so she went screaming into the living room. The mother went in and came out screaming, apparently at her husband. The mother reported that she thought she fainted after that. The girlfriend later went back into the room and removed a strip of bandage that was

wrapped around the boy's arm, which she later said he had threatened to hang himself with. The traditional counsellor arrived at about 11:00 pm and the body was on the floor where the RCMP had left it. This counselor told me that she was worried about a young male client of hers when I was speaking with her the next day about these details, and she got up to face the window. I could see that she was crying and went to comfort her.

One of the counselors at Social Services indicated that she was going to wash the body. I asked whether the RCMP or nurses do this, but she said that community people do this themselves. Two older Inuit women came in, and the eldest spoke English. She was the community's designated person to wash bodies, and she said she had been doing this since the age of 19 when she learned it from her father, who had been the person to do this. She said that it is difficult and that it takes her three days before she is "okay" after washing a body. She indicated that it was particularly difficult to wash the bodies of relatives, but she said that was the only person in the community who really knows how to do this. She added that it would be good if someone from another community would wash bodies, someone not related to the deceased. She asked me to join them, the three women, in washing the body. We walked to a nearby small building, in which there was a large space and a large, silver coloured metal box with two shelves for bodies. The boy's body was on the upper shelf. I helped arrange two low tables in front of the door of this box, which was actually a fridge with a temperature gage on the outside. We slid the body out and pulled the body tray onto the boxes below. The older woman handed out surgical gloves that we all put on. She then said a prayer in Inuktitut and the two other women joined in. Two of the three made the sign of the cross when they were finished. We unzipped the body bag. The body was stiff, with arms crossed and partially folded up

over the chest. On the back of the boy's left hand was written, in capital letters, "FUCKEN BULLSHIT" with the F especially thick. There was blood on the right side of his face and a small bullet scar was visible a few inches to the right of his right eyebrow. It had already begun clotting; the body heals even when it is dying. We washed the blood off his face and head and right shoulder. His right eye was swollen from the bullet behind it. He was wearing loose jeans and an old, large football sweatshirt. He was a large boy but not overweight. I lent my knife to one of the women to cut his sweatshirt off. One of them laughed and said that I had a knife because I was *Qallunaat*. We dressed him with some difficulty in another sweatshirt and windbreaker. I went to get the Inuit RCMP officer for a fluid sample for toxicology, and she returned with me with a needle and vial. She aspirated an eye for fluid. One of the women said that she was glad I was there.

Later that day I went to the high school to speak with the principal and vice-principal. We spoke for some time. They told me that the boy was no longer a student there, as he had been expelled for damaging property. The principal said that he now felt guilty about this. He said that the boy had recently broken his finger after punching a wall. I realized that the hole in the wall of his room that his girlfriend had thrown bullets into was likely caused by his punching through it. The principal suggested that I come in and speak with the teachers in a few days, which I did. I had done this quite a few times in schools in the south after a suicide, with both students and teachers.

I returned to Social Services, and one of the counselors told me that the 16-year-old boy I had befriended who had been arrested for multiple break-ins and was serving time in a juvenile detention center in Ottawa had tried to kill himself the day before. He

was found hanging by his belt, unconscious with a blue face. They revived him and he was now in the Ottawa Children's Hospital.

These cases of suicide were the five suicides in Igloolik during 2004-05. The last suicide described in detail was the only suicide during 2005 in the community and the only one that took place during my fieldwork. Of these five suicides, four were males. Three died by hanging, one by stabbing, and one by gunshot. From what I learned about these cases, two of the men had assaulted women, and the 13-year-old girl had been sexually abused. Three of the men had been experiencing problems in their relationships with women, and only one of the suicides involved alcohol. One man who killed himself was waiting to appear in court for assault. These demographics are rather close to those for suicides in Igloolik described earlier. The suicides speak to themes I found in my previous study (Kral 2003), of communication problems, family problems, romantic relationship problems, feeling alone, and violence toward women and girls. And of suicide being a popular choice. Neizen (2009) has described suicide contagion in Aboriginal communities, and suggests that for many, suicide may be a way of belonging. I heard a number of young Inuit tell me that suicide is a way of joining their relatives and friends who have died by suicide. One young woman told me that she would literally be with her dead friend if she killed herself just as she was sitting beside me, and that her dead friend was now with his uncle who had killed himself the year before. I also heard quite a few stories from Inuit who had been suicidal that they were visited during this difficult time by their dead relatives or friends who were asking these Inuit to join them. These visits were typically in the form of a presence at the foot of their bed, in a doorway, or beside them in a chair. Neizen writes that what is shared is the condition of

loneliness, a restless paradox of life among especially male Inuit youth. What is also shared is the idea of suicide as an option for painful circumstances, a cultural script or schema that includes motive and method (see Appendix I).

I heard some stories about childhood abuse in Igloolik, but this was a topic very few Inuit would discuss with me. One middle age Inuk friend told me about his uncle who he was living with, a nice older man who walked with a severe limp. My friend informed me that the limp was from severe physical abuse his uncle had experienced in his family as a child. Indeed, he noted that one of the abusers was now a respected elder and a prominent member of the Inulariit Elders' Society in Igloolik. He added that his uncle also has old burnmarks on his hands and arms from cigarettes, and scars on his chest, stemming from this abuse.

The expression of anger and aggression has been traditionally suppressed in Inuit culture, including among adolescents (Briggs 1970; Condon 1988). Writing about one of the regions of Nunavut, Mowat (2005/1951: 145) called anger "the only really indecent thing in the land." I interviewed the principal of Ataguttaaluk Elementary School, who told me that fighting among the children has been increasing dramatically, starting in grade 3 and being especially prevalent in grade 7, especially over the last two years. He saw this as an expression of anger. Domestic violence in Nunavut is most commonly expressed during alcohol intoxication. Again, Burkhardt (2004) found alcohol to be the primary factor causally attributed to domestic violence by Inuit. Alcohol has contributed to the often loud expression of both positive and negative emotions among Inuit, especially centering around romantic relationships where such negative expression has too often led to violence (Burch 1975). This is in a culture where "overt" (in a more

Western sense, i.e., oral) affective expression was usually only displayed publicly and positively with infants and young children. It is a sad repetition of the disruptive effects of alcohol within families that was seen in the colonization of Indigenous peoples in North America two and three centuries ago (Mancall 1995). As a substance of disinhibition, alcohol is eliciting the expression of much anger and frustration among Inuit. Although the average blood alcohol level in young Indigenous suicides in southern Canada and the US is very high and significantly higher than that of non-Indigenous suicides (Malchy, Enns, Young, & Cox 1997, O'Neill 1993, Sigurdson, Staley, Matas, & Hildahl 1994), these levels were rarely taken and reported for Inuit suicide deaths prior to 1998. Coroners' reports rarely mention alcohol intoxication prior to this year, preceding or associated with the death, and often report its absence. I did not see much alcohol abuse among Inuit youth in Igloolik, and suspect that most suicides are alcohol-free. This was confirmed when I spoke with the Chief Coroner of Nunavut in Iqaluit, who reported that blood alcohol levels are now taken from most suicides, and they are generally very low if present at all. Alcohol appears to be more of a problem for the middle-aged, residential school generation. Nevertheless, suicide is culturally scripted in Nunavut as it is everywhere, both in reason and method. Most take place during the night when the family is asleep, where the young Inuk typically hangs himself or herself quietly on the clothes rod in his/her bedroom closet, facing the wall on the left side. The body is discovered by family members in the morning. Not many suicide notes are found, but the few I have seen have thematically been about broken love relationships.

## **Family Matters**

In a previous study we found that Inuit of all ages and of both genders believed that well-being, or mental health, was most directly tied to the family, communication, and traditional cultural values and practices (Kral, 2003). Sadness was most commonly related to the absence of these features, especially to things not going well in the family including losing someone, not being able to be with family members, and arguments or violence within the family. The family centered more prominently than any other subject in meanings of wellness, happiness, health, and healing. Inuit who had been suicidal reported that speaking and being with family members were the most successful means of preventing their suicides. Family is thus the most successful means of suicide prevention.

The loss of communication across the generations within families is one of the most noticeable changes for Inuit since the government era began. Both youth and elders are found to be waiting for each other, yet the distance between them is apparent. From the narratives shared here it would appear that children and parents are also waiting for each other. An 18-year old male spoke about youth spending time with elders. “They need to, but maybe they don’t want to. Our culture is important to me because we’re losing our culture because of modern-day life.” But much cooperation still persists in family life. Inuit are highly motivated to maintain family ties and traditions in spite of modern changes. These values must be at one center of suicide prevention efforts.

Being on the land is considered by most Inuit to be culturally and spiritually important, part of being an Inuk. This is particularly important for Inuit men. Dorais & Searles (2001) have called this “ecocentric identity” for Inuit given their ties to place,



which historically holds for Indigenous North Americans more generally (Feld & Basso 1996). The *-miut* suffix Inuit use to describe themselves, as a people *of a place*, has been used for a great many generations. Inuit Elder Barnabas Peryouar (2004: 121) has said “The land, rivers, and lakes where people hunted and camped all have names, and people would be called by the name of the land where they were from.” For Iglulingmiut, the land is closely associated with concepts of health, illness, and healing (Goldstein 2004). Being on the land, including camping with family and hunting, was found to be the second most important feature of happiness for Inuit next to the family itself, and eating country food from the land was found to be the most important component of health (Kral 2003). “There’s not many people who are hunters now,” according to a youth in his late teens. “In the past, all the guys were hunters, but right now it would be less than 20% [of male youth] are hunters.” He believed that hunting would help young men “get their anger out.” Young Inuit men have a desire to be hunting on the land, and many do not have the opportunity as hunting has become expensive for gas and snow machine repair, and having a snow machine to begin with. Fortunately, some hunters benefit from regional hunter support programs. There are only about seven dog teams in Igloolik used for hunting, and most hunters today use snow machines. Inuit men have reported some of the happiest times of their lives to be when they were hunting on the land, and family relations improve when they are on the land together (Goldstein 2004). Elders in Igloolik have often organized land training opportunities for youth, and the benefits for youth have been noticeable (Takano 2005). One 16-year old boy I came to know well was from a very poor and broken family, had a history of arrests for break-and-entry, and he had made at least two serious suicide attempts – one was at a youth detention centre described

earlier. He went hunting on a land program for troubled youth with an elder, and following this he stayed out of trouble for at least a year. He had no father and nobody to go hunting with, but he told me about catching his first seal on the land program with great joy. He was now a hunter, a real man. A land program for hunting was developed at the Baffin Correctional Center, the only prison in Nunavut, and I heard reports that recidivism was diminishing since it had begun. In Nunavut, a vastness of space captures the imagination and the silence of the land is almost audible. For Inuit men, the land is calming and healing, giving a sense of emplacement and identity.

Yet anger is unfortunately a problem for many Inuit male youth. This is ironic given that the ethnography by Briggs (1970) of an Inuit family in the 1960s, a classic in psychological anthropology, is entitled *Never in Anger*. Here is a culture where interpersonal and family relationships are of central importance, and the expression anger or hostility was not accepted before the settlement days. One older Inuk man, a leader in the community, expressed this as *uirisautit*, which means “many things that irritate you.” He thought that suicide is “having too many *uirisautit*,” and that the center of the problem of suicide has to do with gender. Suicide for many Inuit youth is tied to romantic relationships. It is clear that parents and elders are realizing that young people need their guidance. The Western dating game has clashed with the arranged marriages that were taking place. While I found that arranged marriage, while infrequent, still persists in a few more traditional families, a bringing together of the Western model of love with traditional respect and interdependence among males and females needs much attention.

The pernicious effects of colonialism/imperialism for Indigenous peoples are seen most directly on the family, which has been at the center of their lives and social

structure. Social and psychological problems appear to stem from this, from the words of the people. Corin (1996) has identified suicide risk in the context of massive social change as that affecting one's sense of the future, the perceived relationship between the self and the world, and a feeling of personal value. A problem in the case of Inuit male youth is identified by Joiner (2005) as one of the most powerful suicide risk factors across cultures: perceived not belonging. The feeling of deep aloneness experienced by these Inuit male youth is from their families and their girlfriends. Gender roles have been changing, and for Inuit men this has affected their sense of themselves and their relations with each other, with women, and with their families. For many, romantic relationships have become tumultuous. Problems in these relationships have become the major precipitant for suicide, and male youth are feeling alone. New cultural models of love and sexuality have disrupted traditional patterns. Masculinity in Nunavut has been modernized in a complex mix of traditional and Western cultures. Rather than instigating more professional mental health models and interventions from the outside, which for Indigenous peoples has not worked well (Gone 2008, Prussing 2008), Inuit communities need to organize action for themselves. Suicide prevention is beginning to be addressed from an Inuit point of view and in numerous cases is working (Inungni Sapujjijit 2003, Kral & Idlout 2009). Many Inuit communities are beginning to do this, and the efficacy of this action is being documented and shared. As with suicide prevention, the communities are increasingly taking responsibility for their own wellness programs, with government support for this. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada has recently made community agency for well-being a priority for funding. There are

numerous Inuit youth who are doing well with their families and romantic relationships, and their stories need to be heard. The sun is returning to Nunavut.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Youth Empowerment and Action<sup>4</sup>

#### Community Wellness

In April 1995 the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Canada, released a document entitled *Working Together for Community Wellness: A Directions Document* (Northwest Territories, 1995). Developed with input from Inuit communities and several government departments, the document was a proposal for a “new vision” of healthier communities across the Canadian Arctic, a region at that time called the Northwest Territories. In 1998, the GNWT developed a Mental Health Framework to begin planning for integration of mental health services. Inuit had begun serious discussions with the federal government about land claims and self-determination in the 1970s, and with a land claim being signed in 1993 and Nunavut coming into being with its own government in 1999. Nunavut residents chose to use the public style of governance as opposed to an Aboriginal government. Since the creation of the government of Nunavut, discussion surrounding community wellness has been taken more seriously.

Although there is evidence that some nationally known determinants of health are also valid for Native peoples in Canada (Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002), it is vital to understand mental health and well-being from local and Indigenous perspectives. The Bathurst Mandate of the Government of Nunavut (The Bathurst Mandate 1999) appears to have defined the Inuit perspective on mental health as *Inuuqatigiitiarniq*<sup>5</sup>, “the healthy

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<sup>4</sup> Some of this text is from Kral and Idlout (2009).

<sup>5</sup> *Inuusiqatigiitiarniq* translates into English as “to have life as a positive state of being.”

interconnection of mind, body, spirit, [people], and the environment.” Studies of suicide among Native North Americans have shown a relationship between community ties to traditional values and practices and attenuated suicide rates (Berlin, 1987), and between fewer suicides and community/tribal control related to education, health services, police and fire services, self-government, and cultural facilities (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). In a review of suicide prevention programs for Native American and Alaskan Native communities, Middlebrook and colleagues (2001) concluded that programs work best if they are both culturally relevant and developed with major community input. Community involvement in and control of policies and programs, commonly referred to as community empowerment, has thus been shown to make a significant difference in subjective well-being. Below I will try to show that it is community control that is the determining factor in successful suicide prevention and mental health outcomes in indigenous communities.

Well-being among Inuit in the Canadian Arctic has been moving in the direction of local control and responsibility. The devolution or transfer of power of health services from the federal government to the Northwest Territories began in the 1980s, culminating with the transfer of health care from the federal government to the GNWT in 1988. Little impact of this change, however, was felt at the community level (O’Neil, 1990). The bureaucracy was not working, and new ideas were needed (Waldrum, Herring, & Young 1995). The 1995 GNWT report on community wellness, referred to earlier, resulted from concern over the continuing rise of social problems within Inuit communities. These problems have included intergenerational segregation or the weakening of traditionally strong bonds of affection, respect, and teaching roles across generations; family and

interpersonal violence; alcohol, and drug abuse; child abuse and neglect; suicide; Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; high rates of teen pregnancy; and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The programs and services addressing mental health were not working, and there was a lack of coordination across the relevant government departments. By 1993, a GNWT working group had been established to develop a community wellness strategy for Inuit communities. It was resolved that communities would be responsible for their own healing and wellness strategies, and that the government would assist and support as was seen fit by the communities. It was a strategy of community empowerment and shared responsibility, replacing one of external control and authority by a largely *Qallunaat* government. The seat of the northern government was still in the western Arctic, or Denedeh, while many of these problems were significantly worse in the central and eastern Arctic, or Nunavut. While the population of the western Canadian Arctic is almost twice that of Nunavut, for example, over 70% of suicides were taking place in Nunavut by 1997. The western Arctic is comprised of mostly the Dene First Nation, while the east is almost all Inuit.

In two important community-based workshops and numerous meetings organized by the GNWT in 1994, the first order of business in the development of a community wellness strategy was agreement on a definition of a healthy community. It is noteworthy that the Inuit “community” before the government era was the extended family camp, and the settlements that are now called communities are of a very different order. They are a mixture of multiple extended Inuit families and Canadian bureaucracy. Several GNWT departments jointly sponsored these 1994 meetings in Yellowknife and Rankin Inlet. The departments included Education, Health and Social Services, Culture and Employment,

Justice, Municipal and Community Affairs, and the NWT Housing Corporation, with Aboriginal and community participants attended these meetings. The following characteristics of a “healthy community” were agreed upon: having a strong sense of community; having a strong sense of family life; an emphasis on personal dignity; a state of well-being; a strong sense of culture and tradition; zero tolerance for violence, substance abuse, and child abuse/neglect; and integrated services. Attention was then directed toward four areas of planned change: (1) prevention, healing, and treatment, (2) education and training, (3) interagency collaboration, and (4) community empowerment. Government money was spent, action was taken. Three crisis lines were established or further supported; women’s shelters were set up in a number of communities; an alcohol/drug rehabilitation clinic was opened in Iqaluit; suicide prevention training workshops were held over a three-year period for selected representatives of communities; additional training programs were established or further supported, some within Nunavut Arctic College. These programs were to provide training in nursing, community health, social services and social work, teacher education, general counseling, and drug/alcohol counseling. Frontline health and social service workers began to receive additional training.

### **Top-down training opportunities**

Community empowerment meant significant involvement in the planning and administration of members’ own health and social services based on these guidelines. Youth Committees were established or further supported in each community, beginning in the Baffin Region. Each community in Nunavut had, in addition to a Hamlet Council



with elected representatives, an education committee, housing committee, elders society, hunters-trappers organization, and numerous other committees or groups overseeing the broad spectrum of health and well-being. Controlled drinking communities, ones where a limited amount of alcohol can be ordered every month, had active alcohol committees who reviewed all orders for alcohol and the people doing the ordering. The members of these committees were exclusively or almost exclusively Inuit. Health remains, however, in the control of the territorial government, as do social services in most Inuit communities.

The new Nunavut government has since 1999 incorporated the administrative and service models of the previous GNWT and the federal government, however it has declared as its mandate the incorporation of traditional knowledge or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) into this model (Nunavut, 1999a). IQ is *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* or a form of traditional knowledge, what Jaypetee Arnakak (2000) called an Inuit psychology involving integration, transmission of knowledge and skills, and respect for place in society through the kin network. Wenzel (2004: 248) adds that IQ includes Inuit cultural ecology and is seen as a work in progress, “acquired over an extended period.” Forms of this incorporation have begun to take place in education, corrections, health, social services, and the Departments of Sustainable Development and Environment including the 2003 Nunavut Wildlife Act, for example. Yet this blending of Inuit and Euro-Canadian philosophy and social organization remains a major challenge. Individually-focused Western health services, including mental health, can be at odds with the family being at the centre of Inuit well-being (Kral, 2003). Inuit knowledge emphasizes the particular and personal, the practical and functional, and the relational

and reciprocal, while scientific-Western knowledge is general, abstract, and hierarchically authoritative (Kublu, Laugrand & Oosten, 2004 [1999]). The challenge stems, in part, from what kind of community is imagined and by whom.

Health and wellness remains, however, in the control of the territorial government, as do social services in most Inuit communities. Communities are still given programs by the government with virtually no opportunity to determine or contribute to their content. Furthermore, these programs continue to create some divisions between Inuit communities and government, and within communities, because they are usually administered by community-based government workers. Knowledge from elders, the traditional teachers of lifeways, is usually taken as advice in a superficial manner. The Government of Nunavut has “IQ Committees” with advisory meetings which are usually restricted as to what information is provided to the elders.

The Canadian government has been making an effort to improve the well-being of Indigenous peoples in this country. One example is the blending of Western and Indigenous wellness approaches under a program called Brighter Futures (2006). Brighter Futures was developed in 1992-93 to develop culturally sensitive, community-based health programs for First Nations and Inuit in Canada, directed primarily for young children but designed for family and community health and wellness. Based in the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada, Brighter Futures has been a financial resource supporting communities seeking funding for projects directed toward the improvement of “physical, mental and social well-being.” Program elements have included community mental health (e.g., hiring counselors, suicide or violence prevention workshops, healing), child development (e.g., pre-school programs, youth programs),

solvent abuse (e.g., peer counseling, education), injury prevention (e.g., first aid or safety courses), healthy babies (e.g., Fetal Alcohol Syndrome awareness workshops), and parenting skills (e.g., parenting and communication workshops).

Brighter Futures in the Nunavut government is administered through the Department of Health and Social Services, and in keeping with the original goal of the program, it is strongly community-based. By 2000, most of the projects funded in Nunavut were in community mental health (107), followed by child development (76), parenting skills (12), injury prevention (7), and solvent abuse (3) (see [www.gov.nu.ca/hsssite/hssmain.shtml](http://www.gov.nu.ca/hsssite/hssmain.shtml)). Separate funding has been available for solvent abuse through the federal government National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP). Project examples have included the hiring of community wellness coordinators, teaching youth traditional hunting and language skills, providing breakfast to schoolchildren, holding a youth/elder conference, healing sessions for sexual abuse survivors, a bible study camp, drug/alcohol healing sessions, hockey skills development, student filmmaking, mathematics and language tutoring, a men's self-help group, suicide prevention training, and recording oral histories from elders. It is important to note that these projects were designed and/or managed within the communities. Other programs funded through the same branch of Health Canada are the Building Healthy Communities Initiative, directed at increasing community services in mental health, home care nursing, and solvent abuse; Non-Insured Health Benefits funding, mainly for dental, vision, and prescription coverage, which also provides some coverage for one-on-one professional mental health treatment; and the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program supporting community-based prevention program and residential treatment centers.

Although the concept is well-intentioned, Brighter Futures remains with many administrative challenges. Funding is allocated to a community project for one year starting April 1, yet it can take up to six months before a community is able to receive the money. Then in order to continue funding, communities must submit an evaluation report which itself takes much time. This means that communities might only have three to four months instead of one year to actually run their program. Unused money must be returned at year end, with often insufficient time to spend it. Brighter Futures can thus become administratively complex at both government and community levels. Yet Inuit communities in Nunavut are increasingly taking wellness into their own hands, and it is here where we are seeing the first significantly positive outcomes. Recent examples can be found in many Inuit communities, but given space constraints I will mention only two concerning suicide prevention.

### **Mental Health from the Inside**

Community empowerment can become personal empowerment through community discourse on healing, argues Catherine Degnen (2001). She points to the importance of Aboriginal communities initiating their own healing, one way they are regaining control over their lives. Many communities have begun to address the problem of suicide through such local discourse. Suicide has continued to increase among youth in Nunavut in spite of the recent government initiatives, however with wide variation in suicide rates across communities. I will briefly describe activities that began in two Nunavut communities just before each experienced a decrease in suicide, activities that community members attributed to the saving of lives.

The first community is Qikiqtarjuaq, formerly called Broughton Island, with a population of about 500. It is an island off the eastern coast of Baffin Island, above the Arctic circle. In 1994, it had the highest suicide rate of any community in the Canadian Arctic, with 12 youth suicides taking place between 1986-1993. Then the suicides stopped for several years. Inuit in other communities were saying that the people of Qikiqtarjuaq did something “from within” that had worked. In 1998, I was conducting fieldwork in that community and inquired about what they had done (Kral, 2003). Inuit there, including a few who had helped organize local suicide prevention activities, reported that two related events had taken place. One was the gathering of community members, regularly over a period of time, in the gymnasium located in the basement of the Hamlet Council building. The Council brought people of all ages together there. The local Youth Committee also gathered youth under the age of 24 to meet independently in the same place but at different times. These groups talked about suicide, and about wanting the suicides to stop. Suggestions were made, including having people stop and speak to anyone they saw who appeared sad, worried, or whose behavior had changed (e.g., social withdrawal). The local Anglican minister in this highly Christianized community also had people meet in the church to discuss suicide. The first event thus centered on talking. There may have been a cathartic effect to this talking, but its purpose was one of synchrony – identifying shared feelings, ideas, concerns, and motivations about suicide and its prevention in the community.

A second activity related to suicide prevention in this community was organized by the local Housing Committee. All houses were publicly funded rather than privately owned, so this committee removed from each house the number one method of suicide in

the Nunavut: the closet rod. The primary suicide script here is hanging oneself from this rod in the bedroom at night when the family is asleep, usually facing the wall on the left side of the closet. Every closet rod was removed from every house, and locks were removed from bedroom doors. It was their version of 'means restriction', analogous to gun control, which has had an effect of decreasing suicide where shooting oneself is the primary method for death by suicide (Carrington & Moyer 1994; Lester & Murrell, 1982). This effect has been found for the restriction of any suicide method that is a culturally popular choice (Clarke & Lester, 1989). Individuals do not tend to change the method when the script for it is broken, suggesting that imitation and the internalization of cultural scripts play a significant role in suicide (Kral 1994, 1998).

The second community example comes from Igloolik, the site of my thesis fieldwork. Up to 1994 this community had had one of the lowest suicide rates in the Arctic. There had been one in the previous ten years. Within the next four years Igloolik had a large number of suicides: eight youth and one elder. Yet this community recently celebrated the occasion of not having had a suicide for an entire year. Two events had taken place that community members talk about in relation to suicide prevention. The first was Igloolik's Youth Committee taking a major proactive step. The Youth Committee, about eight or nine young Inuit, held meetings every two weeks in response to a large number of recent suicides in the community. Young people came together at these meetings to discuss what they viewed as important, including ways to improve community life and what young people can do to help elders. This Committee developed, together with the Igloolik film company Isuma, a drop-in Youth Centre. During the day, two elders were there to teach youth about traditional ways of life, and in the evenings

youth had a place to be with other youth. Elders provided separate group counselling sessions for young women and men. The Youth Committee also developed a local crisis helpline, and had six youth serving as peer counselors who received training through the community-controlled Department of Social Services. The Youth Committee also organized two spring camping trips with elders and youth through the Youth Centre, something they had begun prior to its development. The Youth Committee also produced a video on suicide prevention with Isuma. Another video was made of a play they produced on the subject of suicide prevention. Older Inuit became further involved in the Centre when it organized weekly board games such as chess and scrabble. Finally, the Centre was actively promoting the learning of Inuktitut and its dialects. The financial picture, unfortunately, became problematic and these services and activities stopped for a number of years. Indeed, a lack of continued funding and financial management, in addition to problems with the building itself, was the major reason for the closing of the Youth Centre after only one and one half years of operation.

The other event related to suicide prevention in Igloolik was more indirect: the making of a film by Inuit filmmakers and actors, all from Igloolik and centred in the Inuit film company in this community, Isuma Productions. The film was *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, which was released in Canada in 2001 and the US in 2002, and has won numerous international awards including the Caméra d'or at Cannes. It was Canada's official selection for the 2003 foreign language Oscar. The film is about an ancient Inuit legend, and the story takes place before contact with *Qallunaat* (see Apak Angilirq, Cohn, & Saladin D'Anglure, 2002). A shaman disrupts the stability of two families and conflict ensues across a vast landscape and time. It is the story of Atanarjuat, a man on a

journey of tremendous spiritual importance in the restoration of harmony for his family. Inuit of Igloolik were involved in the making of this film, from writing, directing, acting, and filming, to sewing caribou parkas and designing and making the traditional *kamutiq* or sledges from whalebone and sealskin. Inuit of Igloolik have prided themselves for upholding their traditional culture.

Inuit spoke during the film's initial stages of the importance of their involvement in its production. In discussing his sense of belonging, of feeling a part of the community or *ilagijttiarniq*<sup>6</sup> one 19-year old Inuk talked about the importance of young people working together with adults and elders on the making of this film. This young man told of how being involved in the making of the film made him feel good about himself, "because it tells me how my ancestors used to live, and I see it with my own eyes and I see the environment how it was before." Lucy Tulugardjuk of the Youth Committee was ecstatic when she learned that she was given a lead role in the film. She soon helped youth develop theatre in Igloolik, while another Igloolik actor from *Atanarjuat*, Natar Ungalaq, helped youth develop film and video productions.

In a second major film production that finished shooting in 2005, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, Isuma involved Inuit youth in an apprenticeship program. This was on-the-job-training during the filming in filmmaking, television, and website design. Youth were also hired by Isuma to help elder women experts make fur clothing for the sets and learn this important traditional skill. One young woman learned to prepare and sew caribou skin for the first time, and with a smile said that she and her mother are now spending a lot of time talking about this. It was something her mother has done

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<sup>6</sup> *Ilagiit* means family, *tiar* means to try to be in a good position of, and *niq* means actually doing. *Illagiittiarniq* thus means the practice of being in good relations, or of belonging.



throughout her life, but a skill they were never able to share with each other until now. Here was an important bolstering of family ties. Leah Angutimarik, who at age 21 played a lead role in the new film, talked about the positive impact this experience had on her shortly after the shooting was completed. She learned, hands-on, various traditional Inuit practices such as lighting the *kulliq* or oil lamp, and spoke of the older Inuit in the film as role models. She came away from the film with a better sense of herself, saying “I want to be me more. I want to be myself more.” She said that she was a stronger person because of it. It created a desire in her to learn even more about her culture, and to help other young Inuit like herself learn the same. “We’re losing our history,” Leah indicated, and said she believed that this loss of history and identity is related to current problems of suicide and anger among Inuit youth.

The director of these two films, Zacharias Kunuk, is committed to bringing his people back in touch with who they are and always have been (personal communication, October 2002). There is good evidence that learning about one’s culture enhances self-esteem (Phinney 1991). The film *Atanarjuat* sings of reclamation and recovery. The concurrent activities of the community and Youth Committee, and the production of the two films, were constructed by the community; they were home-grown. Isuma received funds to open the Youth Centre toward an initial film/video project, and was thus directly tied to the larger project of community youth wellness. Suicides stopped for a noticeable period of time in a community that had been beset by too-frequent suicides. The tipping point, as the saying now goes (see Gladwell, 2000), for the reduction of suicide was not likely any one factor in the communities but a spread of wellness that coincided with and is directly related to community control.

Programs bringing youth and elders together are being developed in many northern communities, in response to the increasing intergenerational segregation mentioned earlier and the centrality of family and community to Aboriginal life. One such program took place in the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut in the central Arctic (Eyegetok, Thorpe, & Iqaluktuuttiaq elders, 1998; Thorpe 1998). A small group of youth and elders spent time on the land in the summer where the elders taught traditional skills and knowledge in the context of storytelling and practice. “The elders gave skills, culture, experience and knowledge as gifts. The youth showed enthusiasm, cooperation and an eagerness to learn which was noticeable in their attempts, attitudes and morale... Together, these positive elder-youth experiences and Inuit knowledge recordings will provide a legacy of memories that will last well beyond the camp.” A similar “culture camp” took place in southwestern Alaska among the Yup’ik, where elders passed on their stories to youth, “teaching nothing less than how to learn” (Fienup-Riordan, 2002: 173). Youth themselves are involved in and often organizing these activities across communities. Intergenerational experiences of trauma and loss are well-known in Aboriginal country, and this form of negative mimesis or transmission can be countered by today’s young people (LeVine, 2000).

The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council of Alaska (2002, 2003) has implemented a strategy that appears to be working. A set of general principles for suicide prevention was produced, such as having a crisis team in each village, yet each participating community developed its own program. This was based in a shared belief across the Council and Alaska Native communities that imported suicide prevention programs could not address local place and culture. The Council, which includes youth

and elders, conducted “listening sessions” where it learned from community members, including survivors and professionals, while local tribal councils were involved in training their own suicide prevention coordinators. Not training sessions, but listening sessions. Several villages with higher-than-Alaska-average suicide rates established their own prevention projects, and between 1990-1997 showed a decrease in these rates while villages without their own projects saw an increase in suicide rates. One of the plans of the Council is to have communities share with each other their particular projects. The essential feature of these successful prevention projects is that they are community owned to their core.

Warry (1998) has pointed out that Aboriginal community control over health and mental health activities and programs has been central to their success. This can also be seen in Australia’s National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization (NACCHO). Established in the 1970s, the philosophy behind NACCHO is for each Aboriginal community to control its own health and mental health service delivery, including the initiation of such services. An increase has been seen in not only a wide variety of needed services being provided across communities, but an increase in member utilization of these services (OATSIH-NACCHO, 2003). The Health Transfer Agreements being signed between Canadian Aboriginal communities and Health Canada of the federal government, begun in 1989, are similar to the Australian model, designed to allow communities to determine their own health priorities and establish culturally appropriate programs. In Canada this is further supported by the government’s 1995 Inherent Right to Self-Government Policy for First Nations and Inuit, recognizing their constitutional right to self-governance. It should be noted that once community action

begins, it can be catching. The opportunity to develop programs and activities toward well-being within a community can itself lead to further solidarity and commitment to these goals by its members, as it has been shown that social action itself is a determinant of such commitment (Kelly & Kaplan, 2001; Passy, 2003).

### **Community Action in Igloolik**

During my most recent fieldwork in Igloolik, conducting research for this thesis, I involved myself once again with the local youth committee, which was now called the Amittuq Youth Society. Amittuq is the land between Igloolik and the nearest community, Hall Beach. I have described above the efforts of the film company Isuma in involving youth and connecting them to Inuit history and culture. In this section I will explore what has been identified in the literature as the needed new direction in research on social movements and community action, which is on the *process* of such action that includes not only the interactions of various groups, organizations and structures in a community but the psychology and interpersonal dynamics, the subjectivities, of the individuals involved (McAdam 2003, Passy 2003).

I discussed in chapter two how I became involved with the Amittuq Youth Society, and how I had been on their agenda for several months before a meeting was held in Igloolik featuring my primary Inuit collaborator, Lori Idlout, on suicide prevention and community youth wellness. My presence at this meeting and having Lori and an elder speak about my project, both of whom had been involved in the previous *Unikkaartuit* study I worked on in Igloolik, opened the door for me with the Youth Society. I was invited to speak with the Society at their next meeting and continued

meeting with them weekly for the next six months. When I joined them, the weekly meetings were being held in the home of a young woman member, however she soon left the Society and they were left without a place to meet. I offered my bunkhouse, and they took me up on the invitation. I would make tea and hot chocolate each week for these meetings, and usually had some snack food as well. I experienced a dramatic turn with the Society from feeling excluded for months to having them in my residence every week and getting to know the members quite well.

I wrote fieldnotes based on these meetings, and was able to interview several of the members. I had scheduled several of the female members, but none followed through. Again, no young Inuit women in the community would meet with me for an interview, which I interpreted through gender role given that I was living alone and most if not all of them had boyfriends. My being *Qallunaat* was also likely a factor. I also spoke with many youth who were not members, and adults and elders, about the Youth Society to get a sense of how the Society was seen in the community. We will move through youth member motivations, relationships with each other, relationships with the community, and obstacles and opportunities to better understand how youth action does and does not work in an Inuit community.

In 1998, during my fieldwork for *Unikkaartuit*, the Youth Committees in Igloolik and Qikiqtarjuaq were collaborators in the project. In Igloolik, the Youth Committee members joined their organization at that time based on signs placed in on public notice boards such as in the Co-op store. During my time there in 1998, many members were not showing up for meetings on a regular basis, frustrating the more committed members. I worked closely with the then president of the committee, Edward Tapardjuk. When I

returned in 2004-05, Edward told me that the committee re-organized itself shortly after I left with a renewed passion for doing something about suicide prevention and youth wellness in the community. Rather than posting signs asking for volunteers, he and a few other youth decided to become proactive. They developed a list of youth who they believed could contribute the most to such community action and asked them directly to join the committee. After they established a membership of about 10 youth, they decided that they wanted to open a youth centre. Edward informed me later that they were motivated by wanting to find something for youth to do. Idleness and boredom, identified earlier as a problem among Inuit male youth in particular (Condon 1988, McElroy 1972), was still pervasive. Boredom, according to Spacks (1995: 6), is a “remarkably inclusive explanatory notion” and it accounts for a range of problems among Inuit youth centred on perturbation. Edward and his colleagues made the community aware of their plan for a youth centre, and were approached by Isuma who offered to help them get some money through the making of a video film on suicide prevention by the Youth Committee. Norman Cohen, one of the Isuma film producers, also spoke to me about this partnership. Isuma received a Canada Council Grant for the making of this film, and used some of the money to help open a youth centre. The Hamlet Council donated an empty building for this, however the building needed much work. After much work on the building, it opened and stayed open for about 18 months. There were no suicides during this time, and one year after its opening Igloolik held a celebration of there having been no suicides. Disagreements began to take place between the Youth Committee and Isuma regarding financial management, and the Youth Committee took over all financial

matters. The money was apparently mismanaged and the centre closed. Shortly after that, the suicides resumed.

When I started meeting with the Youth Society during the thesis fieldwork, they made it clear that their major priority was to re-open the Youth Centre. It had remained closed for about four years, and the Society opened it for a very short time seven months earlier. They had to close it when the furnace broke down, plus it had been broken into and games and other materials were stolen. There were ten members when I began meeting with the Youth Society, with a limit of 13, and they had an elected executive committee with positions of president, executive vice-president, chief maintenance officer, secretary, and treasurer. They had four committees: planning, finance, administration, and projects. Ages of current members ranged from 14 to 26. The list of agenda items of that first meeting was long and included the mock jail, a fund-raising event where Inuit in the community would be voluntarily “arrested” by the RCMP and put in jail, to be “bailed out” with donations to the Youth Society; a fund-raising event for the Tsunami relief fund; a “smoke pit” game; the spring community fishing derby; the community’s Cultural Performance Group for drum dancing and throat singing; review of the Embrace Life Council meeting where I had received their president’s attention; the three strikes policy for Society members, where they would be dismissed if they miss three consecutive meetings; meeting with the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation; picking up ice for elders; nominations for the language award from the Nunavut Government CLEY; supervising sports in the gym; and finding a location for future Society meetings. They had recently lost four members to the three strike rule and thus four new positions were open, and they needed a secretary and treasurer within these positions. Members were

solicited through posted notices in the high school and Co-op store. There were no terms of office, and members could stay until their three strikes. My first meeting with them was held in the home of one of the female members, in the small living room of a small, spartan house. The only furniture in this room was a single bed that had a homemade wooden frame and a mattress on top with no sheets, and a small table with a black cloth on it. Many of the members sat on this bed, and the rest of us sat on the floor. On one wall hung a large blanket with a picture of an eagle flying, a clock, and a cross with Jesus. At the end of the meeting, a date was set for the next meeting and the executive committee also set a meeting date.

Over the course of the next six months there was considerable turnover among members, including the executive committee with the president being replaced once. Most of the members were high school students and knew each other only casually before joining. Some of the dynamics of Youth Society meetings were described in chapter two. The girls spoke very infrequently, and there was often complaining about members who did not show up. Members seemed to get along during the meetings, and there was much joking and laughing among them. They spoke in a combination of Inuktitut and English, which made it possible for me to follow the conversations. Some members appeared very committed to the Society while others appeared to be doing nothing. One member who had been let go because of the three strike rule spent about two months trying very hard to be re-elected, as he was highly committed to the Society. He said that he had missed meetings because he was caring for his ill mother. He was re-elected, but had much conflict with an executive committee member. This executive member was disliked by a number of members, and they complained about him when he would miss some



meetings. Some thought he dominated the meetings and did most of the work himself, but when I spoke with him he said that he wondered why other members did not volunteer to do more of the work. Another member reiterated this sentiment saying that members were not taking enough responsibility to follow through on tasks and were depending on this one member. It turned out that this member had sold some of the Society's belongings that were in storage, including a television. Some of the members believed he had done this for marijuana money. He was eventually threatened with being reported to the RCMP and resigned. This young man was otherwise extremely committed to the Society and to helping youth in the community. Another member was very popular, a young male who had a full-time job with Isuma. He was seen as a natural leader, and members wanted him to run for president but he was not interested.

Why did youth join the Society? "I was interested in introducing new youth programs into the community," said one young man, age 17 and the new president, "since there's actually almost nothing going on for youth." He had heard that the Youth Centre from a few years ago "wasn't run properly." When he joined the Society, it was about six months old. "There wasn't anything going on. They were really unorganized when I began." He helped keep track of minutes and finances, which he said was not being done. This young person said that he had heard some youth joined because they thought it would help them with their social assistance, which he thought was "too selfish." He added that there used to be an honorarium for attending meetings, \$15 per youth per meeting, but they discontinued this. He thought having an honorarium was "corrupt, almost." Some of the members said that interest in being a member was lower in the community after they stopped the honoraria. One youth also mentioned that motivation to

join the Society was because “most youth think that it’s boring to just stay home.” An older member, age 26, said he joined after his cousin committed suicide. “That really set me off,” he indicated, and added that suicide prevention was a major motivation for his joining the Society. Another youth who helped start the Society indicated that the idea came from Sylvia Ivalu, who works with the Nunavut Government Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) which is located in Igloolik. There had been a previous youth committee which had disbanded some four years earlier, the one that had opened the Youth Centre with Isuma. The new group of seven youth initially called themselves the Friendship Youth Committee but more recently changed it to Amittuq Youth Society. One youth member believed that youth joined the Society because there was nothing for them to do, and they wanted to create things for youth to do. Kurt, a member and age 19, thought that the youth who join are typical youth in the community, but they become more active and committed once they join. Before he joined, Kurt said, “I used to be like stay home all the time, just playing games or just wishing around, nowhere to go, or just visiting my brother.” He indicated that he now feels like a different person who has made good changes in his life. “I like helping people reach their goals, what they’ve been doing and what they’re trying to do.” They wrote a Society Act indicating that “keeping our culture alive” was one of the important goals. When I asked why youth stay as members, and why he stays as a member, he answered that helping others was his motivation. “I’m not seeing many people taking initiative on helping people, so might as well lead and let others know that they can help.” He said that other youth groups began after the Society started, including a dance group, two church groups, and a hockey association. Some good ideas are also contagious.

General goals for the Youth Society included helping youth under the term “youth wellness” and connecting youth to Inuit traditional culture and knowledge. More specifically, members had talked about having the Youth Center move into a larger building, and they were speaking to Hamlet Council members about using the Hamlet building as they were themselves looking for a larger space. To have the Youth Center take over the Hamlet Council building would be a strong symbolic message to the community of the importance of the Center and Society, and of youth in the community. The youth members envisioned two pool tables, a room for elder teaching sessions, a room for x-box computer games, a general game room, and a theatre room with a weekly feature film. One member said that if they had a lot of money he would buy a new pool table, and another indicated his interest in turning the Society into a for-profit business. It was exciting to hear their excitement about having the Youth Centre in the Hamlet building.

Community support for youth committees is essential. Silvia Ivalu from CLEY hosts a monthly phone conference with youth committees in Nunavut, and she reported that those committees with community support in terms of resources and values, such as having adults speak highly about these committees on the local radio, functioned the best. I sat in on one of these conference calls with her. She schedules six communities per call to make discussion viable. On this call, four of the community youth committee representatives called in. They spoke in Inuktitut and I only had a general sense of the discussion, however I was able to speak with Silvia afterwards. CLEY had put together a “youth committee toolkit” for the setting up and running of these committees, which was one of the talking points on the call. One committee member spoke about her committee

wanting to make a film about alcohol, drugs, and gambling “to let parents know these things are affecting youth.” The primary purpose of these conference calls is to have the youth committees share their work with each other and to get tips for their own committees. Each month they have a joint project, such as fund-raising or a Youth Impressions Context for youth essays, photos, and poetry. This work by CLEY is another important form of support for youth committees in the communities. It provides them with a major government department’s hand in youth wellness, and they are aware that they are on the map of Nunavut politicians who see these youth committees as vital.

Youth Society members in Igloolik thought that they had good support for their work in the community. One member listed the primary local organizations providing support, which included Social Services, the Hamlet Council, CLEY, the Recreation Department, the RCMP, and the Community Hall. A few members felt that an important source of support came from parents, as this helped validate their community work. It showed them that parents care about their children. Most of the many adults I spoke with about the Youth Society believed that it was critically important for youth in the community. All of them had children in their teens or 20s, and felt they did not have to worry about them when the youth centre was active. Belief in the Youth Society was especially strong by those running or working in community organizations: Hamlet Council, Social Services, the elementary and high schools, the Health Centre, the RCMP station, and Isuma Film. When speaking with these people, they attributed a major success of this group to having a Youth Centre open in the community. Most of them reported that youth did better in the community when the Centre was open. As noted

earlier, not only did suicides stop but high school attendance increased and break-and-entry crime almost stopped.

Members of the Youth Society also faced numerous obstacles. They had little money and held fund-raising events, however this was not enough to run a youth centre. One of the presidents of the Youth Society spoke about the time the Youth Centre opened briefly almost a year earlier, indicating that parents were saying they wanted the Centre closed. The children were coming home very late or not at all. Once the Centre closed a few months later due to a broken furnace, the Hamlet Council and Social Services wanted it to reopen because break-and-entry crime was escalating in the community, including the buildings these agencies were in. It had been noted by the RCMP that when the Centre was open, including some years ago for over a year, this form of crime decreased significantly. I tried to obtain RCMP data on this but was unsuccessful. Another difficulty was that some of the youth members did not think elders were supportive of their activities. Some elders had complained about the centre closing late at night, as one member told me, “causing students that go to school to be so lazy in the morning.” A larger problem discussed in earlier chapters is the disconnection between youth and elders. Both tend to complain about each other, yet they are also waiting for each other to reach out. Youth taking leadership positions in the community without elder guidance or even input is seen by some elders as problematic, especially given that age has traditionally been related to authority and respect, to *naalaqtuq*. Inuit youth have gained social mobility and status that is in a way very unfamiliar to elders.

A primary obstacle faced by Society members was, as I saw it, their own dynamic. While they never argued and rarely disagreed with each other during meetings,

they often spoke negatively about members when they did not show up for these meetings. Many had a problem with one of the Society leaders, and little was being done for months on projects they wanted to accomplish, especially the re-opening of the Youth Centre. Member turnover was a problem, making sustained focus on tasks difficult. Members would take their time coming to meetings, which often began one or two hours after they were supposed to begin. It was common for members to not show up and get a “strike.” When the controversial Executive member resigned and a new meeting was called, the largest number of youth appeared that I had seen. It was agreed on by most members that they needed an adult coordinator for the Youth Centre, given the history of it failing when only the youth were in charge of everything including finances. They asked me if I would do this, however they did this when the Youth Centre was about to open, which was close to the time I was to leave the community. As one Inuk told me, who was in his late 40s and later helped the Society with the Youth Centre, they are just youth and need mentorship. It is Inuit custom to have children and youth learn from their elders, from parents and elders to older siblings. Such a mentorship model would suit Inuit youth as it would fit with Inuit tradition. Youth are in a middle ground between autonomy and needing this guidance, as many of them say, caught between two cultures. Anger drives some of the autonomy, particularly anger toward parents. Everyone appears to be waiting for community leaders to offer help of this kind, and the receptivity is there.

After a few months of hosting Youth Society meetings at my bunkhouse, I started to become actively involved in helping them. Part of my thesis was becoming action research. In their meetings they were often talking about ideas for the youth centre once it would open, and many of these ideas needed money. I asked them where they might get

some of this money besides local fund-raising, and some talked about asking the government, particularly CLEY, to help them. I spoke with Sylvia at CLEY about this, and she told me about grants that can be applied for these types of projects. CLEY funding was centred on culture and language, and it was clear that any plans the youth had related to these stood a chance of being funded. I mentioned this to the Society members, and they were very eager. I spoke about it with Natar Ungaluq, who had once been a youth committee member in Igloolik and who had done much through Isuma to help youth in the community. We decided to suggest to the Youth Society that they organize a brainstorming session among themselves, inviting other youth in the community, to think of ideas for the Youth Centre focused on culture and language. The meeting would be held in my bunkhouse. Society members were excited about the idea, and a meeting was organized one evening at the bunkhouse. Natar, his wife Sidoni who has also been involved with youth action, and another older member of the youth committee seven years earlier when I had worked with them, Lucy Tulugardjuk, and I hosted this meeting. All the Youth Society members were present and several other youth were also there, totaling 16 youth. Natar brought a frozen char and a knife to share with everyone. The brainstorming began, and I took notes. Natar, Sidoni, and Lucy were role models for these youth. They were Inuit in their 30s and 40s who had once been members of the youth committee and who were now in leadership positions in the community, still involved in youth wellness activities. Youth looked up to them, and Natar and Lucy were the “stars” of the award-winning film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*.

Many ideas for the Youth Centre were generated during the brainstorming session, and a list of 27 projects was generated. They included having more games

including Inuit traditional games that could be played on the land like *amaruja*, a wolf game, and *ajara*, a string game; performative activities such as drum-dancing and film; language learning during camping trips, even day trips; throat-singing; walking on the land with elders, which they called *nunaqpaq*; iglu-building; sewing; carving; making Inuit tools; hunting; making boats such as the *umiaq* and *kajak*; learning the language of kin terms; learning to read syllabics for Inuktitut; elder storytelling; learning about traditional child-rearing; surviving on the land; traditional health, including birthing; traditional leadership; shamanism. Natar suggested giving this action plan a name, and several were suggested. The first was *inusirk* or life, then *pirqusirq* or culture. Natar suggested *kulliq* or the traditional stone oil lamp, where each youth represents a flame. *Pirqusirq* was selected as the most popular. Some think otherwise, but Inuit youth are strongly interested in their culture. Lucy suggested that an action plan be set up with agreed-upon goals, and one member, Kurt, indicated that regular meetings should take place for this plan. The meeting ended in high spirits, and Natar and I made plans to build an iglu on the land that weekend.

Kurt offered to work with me on organizing the 27 ideas into something manageable. Sylvia at CLEY suggested that the Youth Society turn the ideas into projects for one grant application. Kurt and I came up with three categories into which the ideas fit: IQ skills, IQ teachings, and art. The youth at the brainstorming meeting were thus eager to tie their interests for the Youth Centre with IQ. Nick Arnatsiaq, an older Inuk who worked at the Hamlet Council, offered to help the Youth Society meet their goals and began attending some of the meetings where these projects were discussed after Kurt invited him. Nick was eager to help put the proposals and grant applications together.



We had a meeting with the youth members, however their president did not show up which upset a few of the members. Indeed, members took their time coming to the meeting, as they often did, and instead of starting at 7:00 pm it began at 9:00. Nick was looking at me and shaking his head, and told me later that unless the Youth Society becomes better organized they will not meet their goals. Over the previous two months they had lost 8 of 13 members, gained 4, and it appeared that they were going to lose their president. This was likely a major reason why work toward re-opening the Youth Center was at a standstill since I began attending their meetings, even though aspirations for this opening were a frequent topic of discussion. I had just read an article by Basow (2004) on Sapir arguing that a “feeling of unity” was necessary for nations to thrive, and was wondering about such feelings among these youth. I was also aware that in addition to studying their dynamic, I was now actively trying to influence it by helping them with their goal of re-opening the Youth Center. I realized that I was not likely affecting their relationships with each other, and some of these relationships were quite strained. They were not a unified group.

I helped the Society complete an application for a youth center grant to CLEY, and another one to the Brighter Futures program of the federal government. One of the projects to be described in the CLEY application was camping on the land with elders. I mentioned this to Sylvia at CLEY before the application was due, and she indicated that the Inulariit Elders Society of Igloolik was submitting an application in which they too were planning to ask for money for land camping trips with youth. She indicated that this would be seen as redundant by reviewers and that someone would not be funded because of this. She suggested that the youth and elders work together and submit one proposal. I

spoke with Society members about this at their next meeting, and those present agreed that they should work with the Inulariit Society. Finding someone to contact Inulariit, however, became a problem. None of the youth wanted to do this. I did not understand why, and realized that this spoke to youth-elder relations in the community. I met with John MacDonald, who was helping Inulariit put together their proposal, and he said he would speak to them about this. It was still several weeks before the proposals were due, and during this time neither the youth nor the elders contacted each other. John MacDonald and I were concerned about Sylvia's warning. Another youth member, Nathan Tulugardjuk, helped lead members in putting the proposal applications together. A core of four members worked together on this, and I assisted them. The youth-elders camp was not included on the CLEY application, as Inulariit had applied to CLEY for money for three elder-youth camps – six adults and 25 youth for 10-14 days per trip. But there was text in our application indicating that the youth would work together with Inulariit if the Youth Society would receive the grant. Elders teachings were also included among the activities for the youth centre, as was the building of a floe-edge boat for hunting. The Brighter Futures grant application was specifically for a part-time adult coordinator of the youth centre, and this was to be applied for through the Hamlet Council Wellness Coordinator, who was submitting other applications to Brighter Futures for the community. The mayor of Igloolik provided a reference letter for both grant applications, which Nick had arranged, and I wrote another letter. The name of the project was "*Inusiqatiatasuarniq*: Living the Good Life," and the amounts requested were \$51,908 from CLEY and \$26,000 from Brighter Futures. In the end, the grant applications were successful, however the Brighter Futures money was reallocated to

another community project by the Wellness Coordinator. The Hamlet Council paid \$85,000 for renovations to the building for the youth centre, and soon a date was scheduled for the centre's opening. I had earlier asked the youth members of the Society if I could interview each of them at length, and many of them now approached me volunteering for this after the grant applications were submitted. I was clearly on very good terms with these youth, and until that time, two months prior to my leaving Igloolik, I had been unable to interview any youth. Working with Youth Society was the most enjoyable part of my fieldwork experience in Igloolik.

A new president of the Youth Society was elected in the meantime, a male age 17, and under his leadership everything moved quickly toward the Centre's opening. The grand opening took place in April, and announcements were made throughout the community. This was a big deal in Igloolik. The Youth Society members used some of their money to buy candy for the children who would be visiting. Many Inuit parents and children came and stood in front of the building on opening day, a Saturday. The Society members appeared on the roof and made a few announcements, thanking the Hamlet Council and other community organizations for their support. The members then began tossing candies from the roof to the children below, who were laughing and scrambling for the treats. The doors then opened and the place was full.

### Re-opening of Igloolik Youth Centre, 2004.



This was the Centre behind the suicides stopping in 1999-2001, and it again became a place of activity for youth. In spite of the troubled interpersonal dynamics, there was strong motivation among youth Society members to re-open the Youth Centre. They knew it was important to the community and that their work would be appreciated. The Youth Society members scheduled when they would be there supervising the Centre, which was open in the afternoons and evenings every day. Whenever I stopped by, there were many youth inside. One room had a pool table, always being used, and another room had a large television on which movies were played. There was a room and a wide hallway for socializing. The youth in the building ranged from children about eight years old to youth in their 20s. A number of times when I was there some of the younger children would come up to me and ask, “Are you the boss?” even when there was another older Inuk present. The *Qallunaat* boss, still a well-known feature in Nunavut and young

children are cognizant of this. I was always quick to point to one of the Society members as the boss, hoping that my message might sink deeper for the children.

It is an empirical question as to how the Youth Centre helps prevent suicides. The youth I am aware of who have killed themselves in Igloolik were not doing well, and they may or may not have been likely to go to the Youth Centre. I suspect that some would not have participated. The majority of the population of Igloolik is under the age of 20, and it would be physically impossible to accommodate even a portion of these youth in the Centre. Yet the Centre has an ameliorative effect across the community, a “ripple effect” like a drop in the water. How such an effect operates is worthy of study, and would be important in the knowledge of how community action, in this case youth action, “works.” When I asked youth why they think the Centre is effective, the responses I received were centred primarily on giving the youth something to do. A place to go to keep them out of trouble, offered Kurt. The old Centre had peer counseling, which the members believed was very beneficial for youth. Kurt said as a peer counselor he spoke with youth who were troubled in their relationships with girlfriends they were angry with, or who wanted to talk about their anger toward parents. He indicated that many youth stay away from home because of their anger toward their parents. Other youth pointed to specifics regarding the Centre’s efficacy, such as the pool table. This was seen as quite important by many youth. Prevention may rest on a cognitive or ideational level. It may be that the idea of suicide as an option is replaced by better options. Shneidman (1998) has argued that central to preventing suicide is the moving of suicide from the place of a prominent choice to a lower rung, replacing it with adaptive and healthier options. The Youth Centre

provides such an option, whether or not one decides to go to the Centre. It is an option that can be practiced, but it is first held in the mind.

Since I left Igloolik in June 2005, the Youth Centre has not done well. The president's girlfriend gave birth to their child and he had to resign, and there was nobody to replace him. I spoke on the phone a number of times with one of the members who updated me. The hours of the Centre were restricted to weekends, I believe, and was taken over by the community Recreation Coordinator working for the Hamlet Council. The Centre closed and reopened a few times, and over the last three years it appears to have floundered. Sustaining community action such as this is in need of great attention. None of the actions I am aware of in the few Nunavut communities I am familiar with have lasted, and suicides have resumed after the actions cease. I am not aware of any suicides in Igloolik since 2005. The needed community support at this time is for sustainability. The mentorship model would likely be the best method, with the hiring of adult coordinators for these youth projects. The members of the Amituuq Youth Society had big dreams, and the youth in the community continue to aspire a better life and future for themselves. They stand tall, struggle, sometimes fall, and will stand again. They deserve support for this.

### **Indigenous Youth Action as a Social Movement**

We will consider here whether the youth action in Igloolik represents or perhaps constitutes a social movement. Much research and theory exists on social movements as continuous collective action. Core questions in this literature identified by Della Porta and Diani (2007) include whether such action represents social conflict or addresses

social problems, as they see social movements as nonconformity founded in contrasting value systems; the role of cultural representations more generally such as the identification of social problems within this action; the process by which values, interests and ideas become social action; and the role of context, e.g., community resources and support, in effecting the efficacy of social action. One needs to look at what is the collective moment to produce a movement. A first question worth asking is whether Inuit youth action toward suicide prevention in a community is a social movement. It certainly qualifies as collective action. Diani (2007) views social movements as a social process made up of conflictual relations, dense informal networks, and a shared collective identity. Does the work of the Amittuq Youth Society meet these criteria?

Inuit youth have organized themselves within larger organizations or on their own, for example in the National Inuit Youth Council; Baffin Regional Youth Committee (now Council); the Qikiqtani Inuit Association where in 2007 the Department of Canadian Heritage funded projects including the hiring of youth coordinators, development of youth committee workshops, and community youth camping programs; CLEY; and the youth committees in all 26 communities in Nunavut. Youth continue to be identified in not just Inuit but Canadian Aboriginal documents as a critically important age to focus on and as co-leaders of Aboriginal community development. During a meeting on a new partnership between the Canadian and American governments on Native North American suicide prevention in Albuquerque in 2006, I helped the Indigenous youth who were present organize among themselves and by the third and last day of the conference had set up their own table in a large and open discussion session with a sign that read “Youth-Driven Research.” Youth have been identified as a key

factor in Aboriginal mental health (Kirmayer, Brass, & Valaskakis 2009) and in the global human rights movement called indigenism (Neizen 2003). One of the older community leaders I spoke with in Igloolik, who has done much toward youth wellness, believed that youth should take over the Nunavut government. There is thus an Indigenous and Inuit youth movement afoot, and every community-based action by youth fits into this larger frame. This is the context for the existence of the Amittuq Youth Society.

The Youth Society thus *represents* a social movement, but the question remains whether it is one on its own. It is a cultural reversal of youth listening to their parents and elders, where youth are now identifying what is important to them and taking action, increasingly with the support of elders. Della Porta & Diani (2006) suggest that dense informal networks in social movements exist across many actors rather than within one specific organization. Initiatives are coordinated, behaviour is regulated, strategies are negotiated, resources are exchanged, and no one person can claim to represent the movement. Collective identity, another requirement for social movements, cuts across any one activity or change. It comprises connectedness, common purpose, mutual recognition of boundaries between who is in and who is out, and shared commitment with unstable membership criteria. The Youth Society meets these criteria. A final one is conflict with identified opponents, and here the Society may not fit. Yet social movement theory has moved beyond the view that such action is merely a form of reactive crisis (Smelser 1962), and “contentious politics” (Tilly 2004: 3), and is today influenced by global forces of social justice and the relationship between social solidarity and marginalization (Della Porta & Diani 2006). These movements are forms of sovereignty



and include many types of collective action as networks of commitment (Diani 2007). It may not be clear in the larger Indigenous youth movement who or what the opposing force is. It has come about through both youth autonomy and a focus on “the youth problem.” Suicide among Indigenous peoples is almost exclusively among teenagers and those in the early 20s. The youth movement may be less about resistance than it is about responsibility and representation, however it also represents forms of decolonization. Responsibility and representation drives local action such as that by the Amittuq Youth Society. In Igloolik, it may in part be a form of action against parents who have neglected their responsibilities toward their children. Some youth appear to be motivated to join the Society because of this, and one member made it very clear to me that this was his reason for organizing youth action. Yet resistance toward parents is not how it is communicated. The trend in community wellness and suicide prevention in Nunavut, indeed across Aboriginal Canada, has moved away from pathology and problem to a strong emphasis on strength, resilience, and empowerment (Kral et al. in review). The focus is on identifying mental health rather than illness. A social movement with such a positive focus, whatever its origins in resistance and conflict, much be recognized as such. It is nothing without local action, and these are the collective moments for action.

### ***Nunalingni Silatuningit/Community Wisdom***

I would like to go beyond possible remedies for Durkheim’s *anomic suicide*, which include the restoration of social regulation, the meeting of expectations, the feeling of normative belonging, and the stabilizing of runaway social change (Durkheim, 1951 [1897]), and also beyond the idea of *social capital*, the newer term used to describe social

membership and exchange, trust, and “collective action for mutual benefit” (Galea, Karpati, & Kennedy, 2002: 1374). While these constructs address the important benefits of solidarity for individuals and groups, they do not focus strongly on the idea of social action, of collective agency and control as producing such social well-being. Personal control has been identified as an important factor in mental health across cultures (Grob, 2000; Vaillant, 2003). Among Inuit, as for other Aboriginal peoples, decision-making was taken away from individuals, families, and communities. There is good reason to believe that collective control is important for collective mental health, and Bellah and colleagues (1991) have argued that decentralized power is necessary for communities to thrive. As noted above, such control appears to be the critical feature in suicide prevention in Aboriginal communities (e.g., Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

I am here discussing the idea of community or collective agency, something not common in Nunavut. The term “agency” in its modern sense refers to the individual and is founded in Protestantism, capitalism, and liberalism (Asad, 1996). Indeed, it has been traditionally pitted against the collective (Bakan, 1966; Fuller, 1998). Collective agency, however, can be viewed as an internal locus of control felt by individuals that is at once shared around both activity and identity—the two being interdependent. Collective agency takes place when members of a group or community participate in an activity that they have created themselves, that is “theirs” over time and recognized as positive. Agency is here seen as a quality of action, a process, rather than a bounded, internal force. Yet knowing and believing that one can execute a particular action is the self-efficacy tied to mental health. Much has been written on the beneficial psychological effects of internal locus of control and self-efficacy on individual well-being (Grob,

2000), and we extend these concepts to the community. Collective efficacy, “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments,” is predictive of such attainments (Bandura, 1997: 477). It is here that the personal/subjective and the collective share a common ground. Collective agency becomes directly tied to personal agency. It is ownership and control tied to the human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This may be especially relevant to Indigenous peoples, who have historically been kinship-based cultures (Demallie, 1998; Miller, 2002). Family-centred interdependence may be one type of collectivism that is relevant to Inuit within the multidimensionality of the idea of collectivism that is relevant to Inuit within the multidimensionality of the idea of collectivism (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). While individual autonomy has always been highly respected among Inuit, kinship and interdependence have historically been the basis of their social organization.

Inuit communities today comprise multiple families and are increasingly mobile, which presents an organizational challenge. Yet a community can become a social network whose members work toward collective goals, even as cooperative smaller social networks within the community (e.g., Wetherell, Plakans & Wellman, 1994). Community action becomes the route to collective ownership and responsibility.

Personal and collective agency does not need to be contradictory. Sampson (1988) adds a dimension to power and control that is on the other side of the internal, self-contained individualism common in Western society that he refers to as field control. Here power and control is located in “a field of forces that includes but goes well beyond the person” (1988: 16). It is a control within what he calls ensembled individualism, an

inclusive indigenous psychology that captures a more fluid self-other boundary.

Autonomous selves are experienced as such even in collectivist cultures like Hindu India (Raval & Kral, 2004), and in the ensembled individualism of Aboriginal societies the locus of control is both personal and collective. Indigenous community control is a kind of field control that integrates personal and social responsibility.

Yet cultures and communities that have lost much control over their lives, e.g., via colonialism and state control, manifest significant social problems. It is a basic collective human need to have self-determination, and we have learned much about this from world history when this need has been taken away from a people. Peter Penashue (2001: 29), the President of the Labrador Innu Nation, writes about the need for control based at the community level: “I think that we have learned now that when people are oppressed, when people are not involved in determining the direction of their lives, they are deeply damaged.” Perceived control is especially important to well-being when the domain under control is highly salient (Grob, 2000). It would be important to understand and explore what domains are salient for different peoples, generations, contexts, and communities. Community control over mental health resources thus becomes an efficacious route that focuses on local salience. Services, programs, and activities become tailored by and for the people who most understand themselves.

Mason Durie (1998) has highlighted that for the Maori of New Zealand, *mana* or sovereignty has become salient in the context of colonialism, and is now directly related to the well-being of his people. These are the types of narratives and histories that help locate the meaning of agency in the plural. The reclamation of collective self-determination is never a smooth process. The Innu, Maori, Inuit, First Nations, and other

indigenous and tribal peoples have struggled, even staggered, but they have not fallen (Amagoalik, 2000).

Returning to the critique of unidirectional, top-down knowledge transfer from governments and agencies to communities, knowledge transfer is now going in the other direction. The most important knowledge is already in the community. Chandler and Lalonde (2004) have recently made this same argument, adding that lateral knowledge transfer *between* communities is another important route. This is also beginning to take place in Nunavut. The *Isaksimagit Inuusirmi Katujjiqatigiit* or Embrace Life Council, a newer organization in Nunavut dedicated to suicide prevention and community wellness, organized its first conference in early 2005 that was attended by 59 representatives of every Nunavut community. The conference was titled *Avamut Iqajuktigiit Katimavikjjuanignat* – Conference of Helping One Another, and among its objectives, the central feature was the sharing among communities of their own wellness activities and programs, ones believed locally to be directly responsible for youth well-being and suicide prevention. A primary theme that emerged from the meeting was that Inuit communities need to be in control of their own wellness strategies (Embrace Life Council, 2005). This is one form of lateral knowledge transfer that becomes a larger collectivity of social action toward well-being, a widening of the circle of sharing.

While the examples of local, community-based suicide prevention and mental health presented in this chapter are brief and few, they speak to something much more important than a well-intentioned mental health program being passed on to or imported for Inuit and other indigenous communities. The Inuit communities did something unique. From knowledge of these communities, it seems likely that these actions fit with

a deeper and very local sensibility of how and what things work. They did something that came from within, something that they created. The successful Inuit community and Alaska suicide prevention projects are likely that because *it does not appear to matter so much what the project is, as much as that it is the community's own program or initiative*. This is in line with the move toward community empowerment of the GNWT in the mid-1990s, and fits with the Nunavut Government's mandate to have each community develop its own plans for wellness (Nunavut, 1999b). Internal community control or collective agency is responsible for the positive outcomes discussed above, however short-lived they may be so far. This is a critically important point. Joseph Gone (2004, 2008) has argued that Western clinical mental health practices can incur an invisible cultural proselytization, replacing local knowledge about wellness and healing with models that are not based on the cosmology of the people living there. The new knowledge is historically and experientially incongruent. It is a form of the state's standard grid of top-down legibility that excludes local knowledge (Scott, 1998). Top-down, outside-in approaches to substance abuse prevention still appear to be the norm for Native American communities, for example (Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004). O'Neil (1988) referred to this as a form of colonization by Western medicine, complicit with the larger colonial subordination of indigenous values and practices. In her chapter in this volume, Mary Ellen Macdonald (2009) shows that culture has yet to find a place in Canadian federal health care policy. Yet we know that community is an essential cultural concept for Aboriginal mental health (Manson, 2000; Waldram, 2002). Culture can become realized in mental health initiatives through community power and control.

Inuit elder Mariarno Aupilardjuk stated recently that “We need to implement the Inuit counseling and healing practices with Inuit approaches” (Nunavut Social Development Council, 2001). These practices must start with local control and local planning if they are to be Inuit. There is a crucial difference between a community deciding how to implement and control a program of the government and a community *designing its own plans*. The latter engages and empowers the community in ways that remedies applied from the outside cannot. On suicide prevention, an Inuit woman elder from Igloolik stated, “We have to look at what the community wants,” and a 17-year old Inuk from the same community emphasized, “Just a whole community working together can make a difference” (Kral, 2003). Writing about hunting societies including Inuit, Hugh Brody (2000: 148) emphasizes:

Elders in many indigenous societies are clear about the benefits of their way of life... Their argument is that the ‘traditional’ system secured important benefits and could continue to do so. Change, they say, is for the most part a result of pressure and invasion rather than an expression of preference. Of course they want to be modern – but on their own terms.

Philip McMichael (2000) has argued that the broader development and globalization projects have not included the empowerment of local cultures. He believes that such projects need a rethinking about priorities toward long-term improvement of the human and environmental condition. These priorities will include, at their base, what Arturo Escobar (1995) was told by the Organization of Black Communities of the Pacific Coast of Columbia: a people’s own “life projects.” The Mental Health Working Group (2001: i) of the Assembly of First Nations/Inuit Tapirisat of Canada has made it clear that

“the most important thing about mental wellness is that it must be well defined in terms of the values and beliefs of First Nations and Inuit communities.”

Self-determination at the community level is not simple. Rather, new levels of complexity arise as, for example, some indigenous communities have experienced internally regarding disagreements about specific goals, people, and methods. The local also cannot always or even easily be independent of the regional, territorial, or federal in Nunavut in terms of activities and programs related to health, education, and social services, even if these activities and programs are created by the community. Not at this time. What we are writing about in this chapter is a form of indigenous anarchism in cooperation with the state; a contradiction, yet currently developing, not without struggle, in Canada (see Graeber, 2004a). In addition to community control, and just as important, is a focus on sustaining community-developed action over time. Suicides resumed in the two Inuit communities discussed above as the activities/programs begun by each community came to an end. A major reason for this in at least one of the communities was a lack of sustained funding. Program continuity must also incorporate flexibility at the community level, where changes in personnel are common. A topic beyond the scope of this chapter, the continuity of truly community-based actions and programs toward well-being/mental health is in need of serious attention. This new complexity of community self-management is, we believe, worth the effort of time and money.

Local conceptions of indigenous mental health must be made clear and utilized. This will likely be some form of blending between Aboriginal and Western approaches. Such a convergence needs critical attention and dialogue. Yet this also needs to be in the context of the further identification and sustaining of local endeavors toward and control



of psychological and community wellness, at the site of the community itself. The tool for community wellness is a respect for and listening to *nunalingni silatuningit*, or the collective wisdom of a community.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Perspective/*Manittugaqtuq***

In this thesis I began with the problem of suicide among Inuit, and have used suicide as the means to study social perturbation more generally. I have looked at questions of “how” as the background to “why” regarding social change through historical/cultural change, at the level of interpersonal relationships and kinship, subjectivity, and agency. I have tried to do this by looking at what Geertz (1983: 6) called local frames of awareness, but also by “weaving them into grand textures of cause and effect.” These grand textures are themselves woven into local frames. Inuit stories of social change typically begin with the government era post-1960. Rather than examining the colonial structures created by the government, I looked at change and interpersonal relationships. While whalers, fur traders, missionaries, and police each had an influence on relational change among Inuit between about 1860-1950, my focus has been on the role played by settlements, schooling, and a welfare economy disrupting social organization in the government era. Suicide began to rise in the 1980s as one form of this disruption.

Suicide among youth is embedded in sexual and kin relations, and in chapter five we examined the lives of male youth in this context. Yet Inuit have not stood still. The reclamation of collective agency has been taking place since the 1970s, and Inuit have begun to advocate suicide prevention “from below” in the communities and territories. Youth are organizing themselves independently, a new direction in Inuit culture, and community success stories are now being documented. In the present study I have examined more closely the process and dynamics of youth organization in Igloolik. This

is a story of the loss and current retaking of collective spirit in the North. In the present chapter, we will review the major findings behind this story and theorize their implications.

### ***Ilagijauttiarniq: Affiliation and Belonging***

The change of primary concern is that of relationship, which includes parenting and parent-child relations, intergenerational relations, family solidarity, and sexuality. My analysis of colonial social order has thus been more focused on relationships than on modes of thought or action. I have argued and tried to show that the outside forces impacting on Inuit, especially during the government era following the creation of settlements and schooling, have had a significant impact on relationships among Inuit. At the centre of these relationships are changes in *naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq*, respect-obedience and affection-closeness, which have been historically interwoven (Briggs 1968, Damas 1963). *Naalaqtuq* and *ungayuq* might be seen as an umbrella ideology or paradigm, and changes at this level are manifest in shifts in forms of relatedness like parenting, marriage, sexuality, and visiting. If a cultural paradigm has been changing for Inuit, it may be one of respect as seen in *naalaqtuq-ungayuq*. As Brody (2000) argues, when respect is lost among hunter-gatherers everything will go wrong. In this thesis I argue that respect began to change dramatically with the creation of settlements and schools and the consequent shifting of roles and responsibilities, of ritual and relationship. It speaks to the artificiality or at least the still unsettling aspects of the settlement/community that *naalaqtuq-ungayuq* and family relationships change for the better when Inuit are out on the land together. Changes in roles and responsibilities were

tied to changes in place, and Burke (2005: 144) indicates that geographers have proposed that modernity is “associated with changes in conceptions of space.” The move to aggregated settlements and matchbox houses added to the colonial disorientation experienced by Inuit. The Canadian government misunderstood the social structure of Inuit and the role of local *isumatuit* or leaders, and created new inflexible structures. These are features of what Burke refers to as colonial social change.

Prior to the government era, observers noted increasing individualism affecting hunting relationships brought by rifles and whale boats, and later reinforced by the introduction of fox hunting for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Rifles, according to Rasmussen, were first introduced to Inuit in 1908 (Maurie 2007). In the North Foxe Basin area, conflict between Anglican and Catholic missionaries created some discord in extended families – who took on one or the other opposing denomination – and perhaps initially among some family members who became Christian while others did not. The denominational split created significant conflict in Igloolik. The police together with missionaries brought a new social morality. The emphasis in this thesis, however, has been on the creation of settlements that began the disruptive change affecting social organization. Initially the settlements functioned as extended wintering settlements, yet they soon became permanent and crowded domiciles. Residential or day schools were located there, and *Qallunaat* government Northern Service Officers took charge of the settlements. There was a poor fit between the *Qallunaat* social organization in the settlements and that of Inuit. Subsistence hunting was moved from the centre of Inuit life by a very strange new lifestyle. Inuit became subordinate in the new welfare colonialism, to the *Qallunaat* boss. For many Inuit this boss relationship, *naalaqtuq* without the

*ungayuuq*, a type of serfdom discussed in earlier chapters by Brody and Wenzel, was transferred to their family.

A new youth culture emerged within the settlements. There were too many people in the words of numerous Inuit, and too many children. These children grew up together and were placed into schools that substituted in many ways for parents. Inuit inferiority to *Qallunaat* was communicated to the schoolchildren, which together with the reduction of parental rule changed the parent-child relationship. The youth-elder relationship also changed, and the youth in the 1960s and 1970s began a rapid move toward what I described as a horizontal, same-generation family away from a vertical, cross-generational one. Some of the values of southern youth culture of the time, which included the “generation gap,” were imported. These youth also began to experience problems in forming sexual-marital relations, as a *Qallunaat* model of love began to dominate. These young adults in the 1960s and 1970s began to choose their own partners, yet they still asked their parents’ permission, which the parents were reluctant to give. The *Qallunaat* model of love appears to have made the greatest impact through the introduction of television in the mid-1980s, which is also when suicide began to escalate in Nunavut. What was identified as a problem in sexual-romantic relations among youth in the 1960s and 1970s is today a crisis for many youth. Most parents are no longer involved in their children’s affinal/sexual relationships. Suicide has become an idiom of distress located for most youth in sexual-romantic and family relationships (see Appendix I).

Obeyesekere (1981) argues that subjective experience reflects cultural ideas in the form of a symbolic idiom. Suicide among Inuit youth is such an idiom, intelligible to

both the individual and the community as stemming from youth experience of aloneness, a perceived and perhaps real absence of being cared for, and troubling sexual-romantic relationships. The changes in family dynamics described in earlier chapters highlight intergenerational segregation as a significant problem, one that suicide and youth anger are in part attributed to. Many parents and youth appear to avoid each other, with parents believing that their teen children do not care for their opinions or desire their attention and youth finding alternatives to interacting with their parents, including staying in their room with the door closed. This was the pattern for Robert, the 16-year old discussed in chapter five who killed himself. His family was accustomed to his avoiding them and staying in his room. When he shot himself in the afternoon when nobody was home, his body was not discovered until 11:00 p.m. when his girlfriend began to look for him. The creation of walls and doors is symbolic of and has contributed to this segregation, and older Inuit are sad that even visiting has diminished. The changes in meat sharing, whereby it is sold rather than given away, reflects for many Inuit a loss of communal caring and a feared loss of the traditional moral economy of sharing.

In spite of this generational segregation, youth and elders are motivated to come together as are youth and their parents. There are many programs across the four Inuit regions of Canada bringing youth and elders together, and these programs are demonstrating efficacy (Kral et al. in press). Yet a number of middle-aged Inuit and at least two youth, Edward and Joseph, told me that the middle-aged Inuit are being ignored. In the focus on youth and elders, demonstrated by the creation of a department of the Government of Nunavut called Culture, Language, Elders and Youth, the parents of today's youth seem not to be included in any action toward community wellness. This

middle-aged group comprise the survivors of residential schools, the first generation to assert a new Western autonomy and ideology, to break away from arranged marriage, to go to school, and to learn English. I believe it is imperative that this middle-aged group be attended to and integrated into community wellness actions and activities. Suicide has not been their symbolic idiom of distress. For many, alcohol and intimate partner violence were the idioms of distress. A number of middle-age Inuit, however, are weary and unhappy, knowing something is very wrong. Numerous Inuit parents are afraid for and of their children. I came to know many Inuit in this middle age group, and they too have felt alone. Many also feel guilt for the way they have acted toward their children, as demonstrated by several of the women saying that their generation should apologize to their children. This age group was taken by the school system from their parents, their original teachers, and taught among other things that Inuit are inferior to *Qallunaat* unless they become more like *Qallunaat*. Many told me they never learned parenting skills. This group has traveled a tough road, one that until quite recently was not a road at all but the land, *nuna*, where they traveled together in harmony.

The family remains central to Inuit life and well-being, and is still their prominent form of social capital. Burke (2005) describes the family as a moral community, with mutual involvement and affective ties. The anger some youth show within the family is a moral component, a judgment and expression that they have been treated badly. Briggs (1968) defined *ilira* as a fear of being treated badly, and anger is a response to this. Anger, according to Averill (1982), is initiated when someone commits an unjustified wrong or defies personal expectations, is typically aimed at a loved one or known other, and is expressed in order to change the conditions that evoked it. Anger is an emotion

that reflects a person's appraisal of a situation. These appraisals are usually based on a norm, a way others would interpret the same situation. Postulating about anger across cultures, Wierzbicka (1999: 88) outlines the personal logic for what she calls the basic meaning of anger, as "This person did something bad. I don't want this person to do things like this. I want to do something because of this." Anger is usually directed at a person, or it can be the expression of general dissatisfaction. Aggression is by no means the only way to express anger, and certain self-conscious emotions will direct its appraisal and expression. Anger associated with shame will lead to negative expression, including self-directed hostility, while guilt may be more constructive, perhaps leading the person to take corrective actions (Tangney 1995). Shame may be a component of Inuit youth suicide, and it will be important to explore its local meanings among youth. In a review of research on anger and suicidality, Wolfson, Freeman, D'Eramo, Overholster, and Spirito (2002) found that adolescent suicide attempters had higher levels of anger than non-attempters, and that anger has been found to be the best predictor of suicidality with adolescent psychiatric outpatients in a three-year follow-up. Other longitudinal studies have not found this relationship (Goldney, Winefield, Saebel, Winefield, & Tiggeman 1997). These studies use self-report measures that ask about conscious and immediate anger, however anger is a complex emotion and will be experienced in different ways at different times (e.g., Cautin, Overholster & Goetz 2001). It appears, however, that anger is more salient for suicidal adolescents than for older suicidal people. While individual differences in anger exist, there is evidence that this emotion is socialized developmentally and influenced by a culture's "display rules" (Lerner & Dodge 2000). Like other things human (and animal), emotions like anger



are imitative and contagious (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson 1994, Hurley & Chater 2005).

Among Inuit, it is clear that in the 1960s anger was not to be displayed (Briggs 1970). Today it is common. What are the display rules for anger among youth today? What are their appraisals, their interpretations of circumstances arousing anger with their girlfriends or families? How is the language of anger used, and with whom? These are critical questions that await future research. Brody (1991[1975]) reported that men were feeling emasculated in the early 1970s due to decreased hunting, subordination to *Qallunaat* in the settlements, and gender role changes including the rising status of women (see Billson & Mancini 2007). Emotions were high in sexual-romantic situations, and alcohol accentuated these emotions. Again, Brody found that these relationships were “heavily charged with powerful, desperate feelings” (233). Brody expressed to me that these feelings were not replete with jealousy and possessiveness then as they are now. What has changed? Is parental guidance continuing to decline? In a thesis planning meeting in Iqaluit one year before my fieldwork, attended by both elders and youth, a male elder asked a male youth to tell us who had taught him about the opposite sex and how to be with women. The youth responded that nobody had done this. The elder looked at us and said that this is the problem. Research is needed to understand the changes in youth sexuality/romance from the previous two or three generations, and the dynamics of these relations and family involvement today. Given that a problem in these relationships precipitates most youth suicides, the embeddedness of suicide in sexual relations must be understood. I am planning an ethnographic study on this topic with an Inuit female faculty member, one who will speak to female youth.

The idiom of suicide is located for most youth in their sexual-romantic relationships. They have had neither mentorship nor modeling in these relationships from their parents and grandparents. This was a problem for their parents when they were young, and it has become worse. Jealousy and possessiveness, particularly among male youth, was not displayed in such a form by their parents when they were younger. These youth are threatened in these relationships because such relations are, as per the North American model, unstable and often time-limited. These are the youth who are feeling a lack of love and caring from their parents, where a sustained love and caring is both expected and necessary. Many youth today are looking for stability in affection-closeness or *ungayuq*, and feeling a profound sense of not belonging or *ilagijttiarniq*. Perceived not belonging is an identified and prominent risk factor for suicide, one Joiner (2005) argues carries across cultures and is particularly acute for collectivist, family-based societies. Social bonds hold even in suicide, which is imitative and contagious (Kral 1994). Niezen (2009) proposes that suicide offers a maladaptive form of belonging for youth in some Indigenous communities with high suicide rates. This is the intersubjective space of shared social suffering discussed by Kleinman (1998). Not belonging takes the form of perceived or real rejection in sexual-romantic relationships, a common threat for male youth. Suicide is now entwined with the perturbation associated with this threat, and suicide is sometimes verbalized as a threat to the girlfriend. Too often it is carried out. Suicide has become a cultural model of distress for young Inuit and too many Indigenous youth. While certain commonalities of suicide exist, such as psychological pain and perceived not belonging, suicide among Inuit must be understood within its historical

context over the last few decades. As Tatz (2001) makes clear, Aboriginal suicide is different.

A form of social suffering in Nunavut not addressed in this thesis is that of suicide bereavement. In my time working with Inuit since 1994, I have not met an Inuk who has not lost someone to suicide in their immediate or extended family, or in friendship. I have experienced it myself, several times, in this work. One might say that Inuit are a culture of suicide survivors. There is not much talk about a suicide after it takes place in a community other than descriptive. It is understood that it is very bad. Yet some Inuit have told me that they wonder why there is a silence about completed suicides, another way of not talking about the problem. Kellehear (2007: 62) writes that social dying continues after a death “because this allows for the social management of the stresses and strains produced in a community by any death.” This social management works for the good death. Bad deaths like suicide, according to Kellehear, promote disorder. Suicide bereavement in Nunavut needs to be investigated and attended to in the communities. It may be that the absence of any social response to suicide leaves this form of “social dying” as a contagious idea among those most similar to the victims, the youth.

### **Agency and Action**

As Amagoalik (2000) has written, Inuit have struggled but they have not fallen. Inuit self-reorganization began to develop after the settlements were established. The organization Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), now called Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, was founded in 1971 and its then new President, Tagak Curley, announced “The government’s colonial system has a lot of power... When I was growing up my parents

were afraid of the White man. The government people were very intimidating to them. This was too much for me... I knew I had a mission... My mission was to create a voice for the Inuit people” (cited in Hicks & White 2000: 52). The ITC proposed a land claim to the federal government in 1976, and in 1980 added that a political territory with a public rather than an aboriginal government be part of the deal. The land claim was ratified in 1992, and the historic Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Act was signed in 1993. This agreement includes land and resource management, land use planning, water rights and management, definitions and boundaries of municipal lands, wildlife management and harvesting, title, taxation, resource royalty sharing, natural resource development, energy and minerals, social and cultural development, and archaeology (Agreement 1993). This should, according to De Vos’s (1976b) concept of geographic territoriality, be critical to maintaining cultural continuity and to personal and community well-being. Geographic territoriality does not mean singularity of voice. Devereux (1975) issued a caution that excessive identification with a single social or ethnic group will be defeating, taking away from what he saw as the natural multiple identities of persons and groups. Current writing on identity concurs that single identities have been a false way of viewing this subject (Rosenberg 1997; Schafer 1992, Williams 1995). Inuit also have multiple identities. Perhaps in keeping with this idea, Inuit communities are being encouraged to contribute their own local knowledge and multiple voices to territorial government policies and programs (Nunavut 1999a).

The building of Nunavut has been one form of indigenism, the current world human rights movement by and for Indigenous peoples. Canada has contributed to the history of indigenism, beginning in 1923-1924, when Chief Deskaheh of the Six Nations

of Grand River in Ontario sought a hearing, unsuccessfully, at the League of Nations in Geneva over tribal self-government (Niezen 2003). Nunavut came into political being in 1999 in the context of what Chaturvedi (1996) describes as the new geopolitics, with a focus on ecological sustainability and the equitable use of space and resources. It is the largest Aboriginal land claim in the world to date, with a territory comprising 1,500,000 square miles – roughly the size of India – with a population of approximately 26,000. Nunavut was created as an act of parliament, as a territory with collateral legislation and a public rather than a solely Inuit government. The Government of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. established the Nunavut Hunter Support Program in 1994, which since 1998 has been called the Nunavut Harvester Support Program to make it more open to women (Wenzel 2000). Hunter-Trapper Organizations have been established in each Nunavut community. The continuity of social and cultural traditions is viewed as critical in Nunavut. There is now a mandate to include *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* or *IQ* (traditional knowledge) in all policy and programs of the Nunavut Government (Nunavut 1999a, 1999b, Nunavut Social Development Council 2001). One of the great challenges for the Nunavut Government and Inuit organizations is to combine *IQ* with Western politics, business, and social relations. Briggs (1997) has noted the major change, especially since about 1990, in the shift from a passive Inuit culture to one of renewal and re-invention. She believes that the focus on Inuit identity is a working tool in this process of renewal. Inuit continue to be proud of who they are, and of their history.

In the previous chapter I described the Inuit youth movement taking place in Canada's north, and how this empowerment, part of the Inuit move toward sovereignty

which is part of a larger global indigenism, inspires local community action. Bellah et al. (1991) argued that a good society is made up of a collective sense of ownership and control directed toward the common good, a concept that is the opposite of the Lockean individualism that dominates Western culture. Bellah (2007: 191) himself acknowledges that all problems cannot be solved at the social level, citing one of his critics, Crain Calhoun (1995) who wrote, “When people find themselves unable to control the world, they simply shrink the world to the size of their community.” Successful community action to prevent suicide and foster well-being is beginning to influence territorial and federal government action (Kral et al. in review). Community, however, is not limited to geographic space. Burke (2005) describes community as “almost as indefinable – as well as indispensable – as the term ‘culture’,” which Williams (1983: 87) describes as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” Like cultures, communities are not bounded entities but are continually under construction. Igloolik has undergone transformation from colonial settlement to a traditionally proud community, in spite of its internal difficulties. Munn (1986) has argued that a community becomes “an agent of its own self-production,” citing Touraine (1977), in order for it to become viable. For Munn this takes the form of the creation of an essential communal value. Pride in being Inuit is one essential value for Igloolik, and the value of taking collective responsibility and control continues to emerge.

Embrace Life Council, an Inuit organization in Iqaluit developed to address suicide and promote community wellness in Nunavut, has begun a program of community networking. Community leaders and concerned members are sharing their success stories with each other, a form of lateral knowledge transfer. In a project

currently underway, my colleagues and I are developing such community networking across the circumpolar North. Communities can become models of positive change for larger social structures, like the territorial or federal governments, who in turn can help them become more autonomous.

Igloolik as a government settlement began as an artificial community becoming a site of a transformed lifestyle. It has been reinvented as a community of pride. This shift from a colonized settlement to a community of Nunavut has been one form of agentic transformation. Cole (2001) places studies of colonial rule into three categories: those that look at how colonialism has transformed a people, those examining Indigenous agency in mediating the intrusion, and those that combine the two. This thesis represents such a combination. Social transformation, wrote Malinowski (1945), is the essence of culture change. Igloolik is now a vast mix of Inuit and Western concepts and practices. Inuit are proud of their cultural identity and are participating in the global world. Yet Igloolik is also a community of difference, making it a location for what Carstens (2000) referred to as the destructive factionalism that pervades the communities of Aboriginal Canadians. Communities in Nunavut have been working toward inter-agency cooperation, with mixed success. In Igloolik I saw agencies competing for the same resources and speaking negatively about each other, while at the same time cooperating on certain events or projects. Youth committees have themselves struggled with this factionalism, and their sustainability is poor as a result. At this writing, in January 2009, the Youth Center in Igloolik is only open a few days a week and is being run not by the Youth Society but by the Hamlet Council. It remains to be seen whether cooperation between youth organizations and community agencies will facilitate the development of

sustaining projects for youth wellness. Youth continue to join the Youth Society in their efforts to contribute to fellow youth in the community.

The understanding of how internal or domestic colonialism has affected Inuit, and how Inuit have responded, remains complex. Colonialism can never be seen as a simple, process of action and reaction. Inuit were subject to federal surveillance and control, certainly. Appadurai (1996) noted that the government counting of colonized bodies was a site of social classification, where “the body of the colonial subject is made simultaneously strange and docile.” The Canadian state imposed Eskimo tags and numbers, a system which Scott (1998) saw as social engineering that excluded local Inuit knowledge and even input or feedback (see Scott, Tehranian, & Mathias 2002) . Yet as Stoler and Cooper (1997: 6) note, “Colonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent.” We return to Wenzel’s (2001) dialectic between dramatic change and cultural continuity, where both acculturation and adaptation hold true. It points to a complicated relationships between colonizer and colonized. This is what Burke (2005) calls transculturation, a term also used by Malinowski who believed that “both sides are active” in culture change and stability (Kaberry 1945: vii). The effects of the trinity (HBC, missionaries, RCMP) on Inuit were significant, and the effects of the government era massive. From subsistence hunting and sharing to spirituality we have seen that much cultural continuity exists. Some traditional families still follow the arranged marriage, and many still have a strong bond of *naalaqtuq-ungayuq*. Globalization has affected Inuit. Inda and Rosaldo (2002: 5) see globalization as not only global interconnectedness, but “a fundamental reordering of time and space” that creates historical discontinuity. This adds another challenge to cultural continuity among Inuit. I am certain we will see



Wenzel's dialectic of adaptation and acculturation continue to take shape in Nunavut. The opening of passage of chapter three featured an old song passed on to elder Noah Piugattuk, one that foretold of wooden ships bringing *Qallunaat* to Igloolik. Nabokov (2002) wrote about historical Indigenous prophets foretelling the agents of great change. The *Qallunaat* have arrived, and remain a small minority with great power. There are many Inuit agents of change today, and here we have seen that they include dispossessed youth in the communities.

The return of the sun is celebrated in a festival every January in Igloolik. To the meaning of this old, traditional ceremony is today for Inuit added a reclamation of their lives and land. As a new territory of Canada since 1999, Nunavut, meaning "our land" in Inuktitut, is a component of this return. Such symbols of renewal have been on the increase for some time (Briggs 1997). Evidence is accumulating that suicide prevention works in Nunavut when communities take it upon themselves to create activities and programs for youth. These programs, another form of reclamation of control, are usually initiated and run by the youth themselves, with community support. The one feature that these successful community programs have in common is not any particular intervention, but that communities are in complete control of them (Kral & Idlout 2009). In a review of Aboriginal suicide in Canada and what works best for its prevention, Kirmayer et al. (2007: 107) note that suicide prevention programs "should be locally initiated, owned and accountable, and embodying the norms and values of Aboriginal culture." This needs to be taken seriously. Similar community-based efficacy with suicide prevention is being seen in Alaska, where Indigenous community wellness teams are building programs from within (Statewide Suicide Prevention Council 2002). Charles Francis Hall had written in

the 1860s that according to Inuit, their traditional and customs “must be followed or everything will go all wrong with these people” (Loomis 1971: 206).

Poet and critic Paul Valéry once wrote that “The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be.” Inuit youth are faced with this predicament. What is their future? They are motivated to be both in the global world and to learn traditional stories and practices from their elders. A number of youth told me they live in two worlds, and that being in both is difficult. Some feel they are in both but experientially in neither, another form of perceived not belonging. In my study I found that many male youth are feeling angry and feeling alone. In a survey of male youth in the south, Pollack and Shuster (2001: xx) found that they “are simply not receiving the consistent attention, empathy, and support they truly need and desire.” This is the case for many Inuit male youth. I did not speak with female youth and therefore do not know if they are feeling this way. Both youth and adults in Igloolik believe that youth need more love and caring from their parents. The mentorship model of a few generations ago appears to be what Inuit are seeking to energize and bring back into their lives. Youth are also able to take care of each other, as seen in the Youth Society’s peer support program that has been run on and off over the years. The youth are in need of hope, of a future – *sivuniqsavut* – that includes their past. The move toward youth-driven community action is having a very noticeable effect on suicide prevention, however temporary. The focus now needs to be on how to best support youth organizations in their work, and on how to sustain their efforts in community and family engagement over time.

## APPENDIX I

### On Suicide and Culture

#### Seeing Suicide: Conceptual Frames

Albert Camus (1955: 3) famously wrote that there is “but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.” As a problem, suicide has been discussed, debated, vilified, outlawed, prescribed, legalized, and studied over a great period of time. Yet suicide remains an enigma, or as Freud (1917: 252) had it, “the riddle of the tendency to suicide.” Given the riddle of suicide, multiple frames have been used and constructed in order that this phenomenon might be explained or understood. In this chapter I attempt an organization of some of the primary frames through which suicide has been viewed. I review the main historical, biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural anthropological approaches to suicide. Emphasis is on the cultural from a Durkheimian and Tardeian angle. Anthropology has been the least explored frame toward suicide, and I argue that it may in fact be the most illuminating regarding our understanding of this phenomenon. I attempt to link anthropology with psychology in the process, given that suicide is both a collective and an individual behaviour. Finally, I outline the beginning of a cultural-psychological model I see as critical to further our understanding of suicide.

A brief definition of suicide is in order at the outset of this chapter. On the surface, perhaps the most common definition of suicide is the voluntary taking of one’s own life. The problem arises immediately with the word *voluntary*, however. There is currently a move, one might say a politically correct one, to end the use of the phrase “to *commit* suicide,” so that causal attributions may be ascribed to conditions beyond the person’s control such as depression, another mental illness, or some form of cognitive

impairment. Calling suicide a death produced by a willful act of the self implies consciousness and choice, yet suicide is usually seen as an irrational behaviour by a clouded mind. The 1971 *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines suicide as “the act of taking one’s own life,” however one can also do that by accident. I will discuss some of these definitional issues in this chapter, and will hold to what I call a sufficient definition with a libertarian leaning: the act of willfully taking one’s own life.

### **Suicide Over Time**

Looking at suicide has increasingly occupied the work of historians. Writers on the subject have long noted changes over time, often dramatic ones, in public attitudes toward suicide. Depending on the era and the context, suicide has been viewed in a number of different ways. One prominent polarity concerning how suicide has been viewed, which still registers occasional debate today, is that of free will versus determinism. The “passions,” for example, have historically been those of acting out versus passively receiving, and Graeber (2004) points out that medieval and early modern writers had passions causing impressions on the pneumatic system and thus conditions like melancholia. Graeber shows them as logically polarized, as “either you act of the world, or the world acts on you” (10). I will show that suicide has moved from a conscious and deliberate act of the self to a symptom of some disorder of thought or brain, the two viewed as independent, that cause the idea and act of suicide to take place in an individual. The historical frame is thus a perspective on changing contexts and interpretations, and as I will show later, supports a cultural understanding of suicide. History is a view of culture the long way.

## Morality of Suicide

Suicide appears to go back as far as human history is recorded (van Hooff 1990), yet the OED has the word only first showing up in English print in 1651: “To vindicate oneself from... inevitable Calamity, by Sui-cide.” Suicide was seen at that time as a conscious, voluntary act, one that was judged morally. Voluntary suicide was connected for centuries to the soul’s immortality, based on the models of Socrates and Christ. Personal freedom and political autonomy were long associated with suicide, informing a relationship between the individual and society and between the soul and the body. The problem of suicide, up to the early nineteenth century when medical science gained prominence, was a problem of free will (Paperno 1997).

One of the first records of suicide comes from the Middle Kingdom in Egypt four thousand years ago. Historians of suicide have indicated that the idea of killing oneself has been embedded most conspicuously within the moral framework of right and wrong. Oriental sacred writings both condemned and encouraged the act. The ceremonial sacrifice of widows or suttee was institutionalized in Brahmanism, and in Japan suicide became a national tradition through rituals of *seppuku* and *hara-kiri*. Suicide was condemned in Judaism and the Old Testament, and Jewish custom did not allow funeral orations for suicides; while family survivors were honoured, the suicides were not. In the Greek and Roman periods attitudes toward suicide were class-based, with condemnation among the lower classes but tolerance and acceptance among the higher classes. Suicide was an intentional act. With Christianity came an acceptance of martyrdom, which became common especially among women (Salisbury 1997; Smith 1997). Pierson (1988) describes a common “martyrdom” among slaves in seventeenth century New England,

especially those who were particularly attached to their native religions, in the belief that they would be returning to their homeland. He described “a common Afro-American conviction that drowning could be a supernatural method for returning to Africa – as well as affording an escape from slavery” (75).

Suicide under certain conditions was acceptable: among women to preserve their chastity, martyrs, and ascetics. Martyrs often volunteered for public execution in early Christian Rome; their execution was also a form of mass entertainment (Salisbury 1997). Suicide was otherwise understood as an individual’s strategic solution to existential problems (Grisé 1982). Plato had suggested that sometimes suicide was rational and justifiable. Mass suicides have also taken place throughout history, typically to avoid persecution (Farberow 1975; Jamison 1999; Szasz 1999). The acceptability of suicide has also varied over time. Alvarez (1971) notes that in the Middle Ages, suicide was a mortal horror and depicted as such by Dante in the *Inferno*; made more morally complex and sophisticated during birth of individualism – often mixed with genius and melancholy – in the Renaissance period; depicted with less imagination as somber, occasionally practical, and often mad in the Age of Reason; and in the Romantic Period, seen as agony and a way of life, “a literary act, a hysterical gesture of solidarity with whichever imaginative hero was, at that moment, the rage” (232). Suicide was both condemned and praised in the literary genre over time (Minois 1999).

Fear and moral revulsion were also apparent in the attitudes toward suicide in some non-Western societies. Colt (1991) describes Christian missionaries writing about their attempts to convert the Baganda people of Uganda in the mid-nineteenth century, who would burn the body of a suicide far from their community using as fuel wood from

the tree or hut from which the person was found hanging. The Baganda believed that the ghost of the deceased suicide would return to impregnate young women of the tribe. The Bannuas of Cambodia buried suicides in the forest, Dahomey tribespeople left bodies of suicides to be eaten by wild animals, Native Americans of what is now Alabama threw bodies of suicides into a river while Omaha Natives believed that suicides were kept from the spirit world. Iroquois and Hidatsa suicides stayed in a separate village after death, away from other souls who would be made uncomfortable. Dakota people believed suicides would always be dragging the hanging tree behind them, and apparently Dakota women hanged themselves on small trees which they would be able to more easily drag after death. The Paharis of India believed their suicides remained forever between the earth and heaven. The Wajagga of West Africa sacrificed a goat to save a suicide's soul. There is a similarity in some of these cases to Christians not burying a suicide, and as late as 1823 a suicide was buried at a London crossroads. These suicides were bad deaths, with rituals directed to ameliorate the soul and warn the living of negative sanctions to keep them from committing these acts (Colt 1991).

Sometimes suicides went to a good place after death. Chukchee of Siberia, along with Iglulingmiut and other Inuit, believed that violent death including self-inflicted death took the person to a good place. Weyer (1932: 251) reported that Inuit of Cumberland Sound in south Baffin, where Boas conducted his first fieldwork, believed that suicides entered a dark place called "Kumetoon" and that their tongues would loll. Ancient Celt suicides were celebrated, and Vikings of pre-Christian Scandinavia who killed themselves entered Valhalla, a place of such reverence that soldiers not dying in battle would often kill themselves with their sword to reach Valhalla. *Seppuku*,

mentioned above, began in Japan one thousand years ago and ensured the samurai a proper burial and respected memory (Colt 1991). Within such beliefs of suicide as a good death, assisted suicide has also been performed. The Inuit until recently practiced this (Balikci 1970). During my fieldwork in Igloolik, a woman in her early 50s told me that her father was that community's last assisted suicide. Her father was old and very ill, and had asked to be killed. The community discussed this with him and agreed, and according to Iglulingmiut tradition a male extended family member killed the elder (likely by cutting the throat). Some of this attitude is seen in Western society today. Bruno Bettelheim, a former professor of mine at UCLA, killed himself believing, according to Minois (1999: 2), that it was a "supreme proof of liberty." Yet he was also depressed because of his wife's recent death, his own failing health and placement in a nursing home, and a major conflict with his son.

### Sin, Crime, Insanity, and the Problem of Will

The Church officially disapproved of suicide in the 4<sup>th</sup> century ADE and legislated against it two centuries later; suicides remained low in Europe because of this through the 13<sup>th</sup> century. One's life belonged to God, and the taking of it was a sin. In 1284 suicides were denied a Christian burial. In France, bodies of suicides were dragged in the streets and hanged in the gallows. Alvarez (1971: 70) wrote that in the early Middle Ages the negative attitude toward suicide as a sin and a crime "spread like a fog across Europe because its strength came from primitive fears, prejudices and superstitions which had survived despite Christianity, Judaism and Hellenism." Seeing suicide as a type of murder made it a crime. For centuries suicide was a crime against the law and against God.



Suicide was first made illegal in England in 673 ADE, with denial of burial followed later by burial at a crossroads with a stake through the body, to the forfeiting of the suicide's property (Szasz 1999). Trials for suicides decreased during the late eighteenth century, when government action changed with public opinion moving toward seeing suicides "More as courageous victims than as criminals" (Minois 1999: 292). Colt (1991) indicates that suicide was first explained as a disease rather than a sin or a crime in 1763, in a book by a French physician named Merian. The medicalization of suicide indeed saw people killing themselves as victims, and the laws against suicide and suicide attempts changed accordingly. The Suicide Act was passed in England in 1961, under pressure from physicians, the clergy, and lawyers, making attempted suicide no longer a crime.

Suicide has also been seen as an involuntary act, at least one outside of normal, rational conscious thought. The medicalization of suicide has promoted this view, which is prevalent today. The first reference to suicide due to insanity was during Charlemagne's rule from 768-814 ADE. Robert Burton's (2001 [1621]: 432) *Anatomy of Melancholy* pleads for mercy, in a religious context, for despairing, suicidal people, referring to them as having an "afflicted mind" and a "wounded soul." John Donne's (1982 [1647]) *Biathanatos*, written in 1608 and published after the author's death, also refers to suicide as an affliction. Donne asks for sympathy for the suicidal, admitting in the book his own inclinations toward suicide.

Kushner (1989) shows how suicide moved from being seen as a crime to a disease during the eighteenth century. Some of this transition took place within the church. Cope (1994: 106-107) described the suicide of a well-to-do mulatto (mix between Black and

Spanish) man killing himself in Mexico City in 1698 in the context of his belief, some of it justified, that he was facing financial ruin. The local priest, a friend of this man, argued successfully that the body be interred in holy ground by claiming that the man had been “a good Christian” but was “sick with melancholy” and thus temporarily insane. An increase was seen in England and America for suicides to be attributed to *non compos mentis* (uncontrolled mental state) or insanity, allowing the deceased to be buried in sacred ground and the death to not be listed as a suicide. Kushner notes that by the end of that century, religion was being seen not as a defense but more as a cause of suicide. By the 1820s, mental illness, specifically melancholy and to a lesser degree insanity, was being associated with suicide. This was related to the development of psychiatry and moral treatment, with physical/biological attributions and interventions. Suicide was referred to as a disease in an article on suicide prevention in the second year of publication of *The American Journal of Insanity* in 1845 (Article IV, 1845). Suicides were “cases of insanity,” which was defined then as “a chronic disease of the brain, producing either derangement of the intellectual faculties, or prolonged change of feelings, affections, and habits of an individual” (Article I, 1844).

The relegation of suicide from crime to insanity in the nineteenth century was no guarantee of humane treatment, given the status of asylums during that time. Rothman (1990) argues that the rise of the asylum was in the context of a more general fear of a disordered society and a move toward social control of those judged to be of any threat. Public county asylums were on the rise in the 1800s in Europe and the United States, where patients/inmates were being transferred from prisons and workhouses for the poor (Jones 1991; Shorter 1997). Asylums were essentially warehouses until the 1930s.

Suicide, like other forms of insanity, needed to be controlled and suicidal people kept out of mainstream society.

Yet in 1838 Esquirol argued that suicide was not insanity per se but a symptom, a view congruent with today's psychiatric opinion. Others, such as moral statisticians like Brierre de Boismont in 1842, would not attribute all suicides to insanity and included such causes as alcoholism, painful or incurable disease, domestic problems, sorrow and disappointment, romantic problems, poverty, ennui, and unemployment. Like Durheim half a century later, de Boismont showed that males, the unmarried, and the elderly were at higher risk for suicide. These data were supported by statistical studies in Europe and Britain. Suicide was now a medicalized problem and viewed as a symptom, and not as a rational decision by a normal individual.

Variations in suicide were becoming known through scientific study. Morselli's (1882) statistical work found suicides in Europe to be more prevalent in the centre of that continent between the latitudes of 47-57°, during the first ten days of any given month, among Protestants, in "civilized" countries, in urban rather than rural areas, and among soldiers and prisoners. Morselli also found that the method of suicide varied geographically, with common methods being drowning in Italy (where hanging was rare), hanging in Russia (where drowning was rare), firearms in southern Europe and Turkey, poisoning in Sweden, England, and Ireland (rare in France and the German states), suffocation by charcoal in France, cutting in Ireland, firearms in some large cities (e.g., New York, Geneva, Rome) and stabbing in others (e.g., London, Milan). He noted variation in method within countries, but common patterns tended to be localized. Morselli's attributions for some of these differences within Europe fit with the

psychologizing of the time toward character and behaviour, with passions, love and misery dominating the south, shame and fear of punishment the centre, and alcoholism in the north of Europe. Men killed themselves more often than women because “[t]he difficulties of existence, those at least which proceed from the struggle for life, bear more heavily on man” whereas the woman “has a more impressionable nervous temperament, yet possesses the faculty of resigning herself more easily to circumstances. Self-sacrifice is, above all, the feminine virtue, as ambition is the characteristic of men” (1882: 195, 197). Durkheim would later agree with this interpretation of sex differences in suicide.

Psychiatry was at least exposed to the sociological discourse of the nineteenth century. Motto (1993: 28) has showed that, in 1845, the conclusion of an epidemiological report warned that the popular press should pay heed to their potential effect on suggesting suicide to readers: “No fact... is better established in science , than that suicide is often committed from imitation. A single paragraph may suggest suicide to twenty persons. Some particulars of the act, or expressions, seize the imagination, and the disposition to repeat it, in a moment of morbid excitement, proves irresistible.” That same year, in the *American Journal of Insanity*, Napoleon Bonaparte’s famous 1801 warning to soldiers to not kill themselves was reprinted (Miscellany 1845). Two soldiers had killed themselves within a month. Napoleon was intent to “putting a stop at once to the spread of what appeared to be a contagious malady” (93). He commanded his soldiers to not abandon life in the same way they should not abandon the battlefield. His directive may have worked, as there were no further suicides among his men for some time.

## Cultural History

An exception to the usual historical survey of suicide is Irina Paperno's (1997) theoretical view of suicide as a cultural institution. Focusing on Russia's collective moral reality of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Paperno examined the suicide epidemic in Russia between the 1860s – 1880s. The epidemic was wrapped in public consciousness as representing the moral deterioration of their society conjoined with the intellectual revolution bringing in the new medical and social sciences. Suicide was understood within “a coherent symbolic vocabulary” of the media and literature, including “‘restructuring’ (*perestroika*) (‘in a pessimistic vein’), ‘decomposition... of the life order’, ‘a time of difficult transition’... or ‘a transition between the old and the new’” (46). Stories of suicide became commonplace in the newspapers, with lines like “Among young people suicide mania has definitely become a social disease, taking on greater dimensions every day” (76). And journalists wrote of metaphoric realities, of suicide's “root cause” being in the social “soil” (87). In her book, Paperno demonstrates that suicide is embedded in culture, in the case of this Russian epidemic through media, literature, legal debates, and reforms, as part of a more general coherent collective thinking and behaviour.

## To the Present

By the 1960s, suicide was viewed by most scholars and clinicians working in the area as a “multidimensional malaise” (Shneidman 1985: 203). Many of these dimensions seem incongruous with each other. Suicide as a symptom of mental illness or severe distress; as aggression turned toward the self; as abnormal serotonin levels in the brain; as

escape from unbearably painful consciousness; as the weight of unbearable social forces; as a cluster of personality/cognitive traits; as problem-solving deficits. Much of the incongruity stems from the absence of theory in suicide studies tying the various dimensions together, with many smaller-level theories centred on the various dimensions and often implicitly but sometimes explicitly dismissing the alternatives. The historical frame has provided the perspective of there having been multiple perspectives, which continues. There has been a gradual move over time from seeing suicide as voluntary to involuntary. When the individual is believed to have made a personal decision about suicide, it has been, from most perspectives, viewed as bad. As a symptom of mental illness or other despair, suicide has still been viewed as morally bad but also as mad and irrational, justifying control over a person's liberty while he or she is in such a state. The individual is not held personally responsible for a decision that has been caused by mental illness or such acute distress that one's rational mind is no longer fully available (see Horwitz 2002). Edwin Shneidman (1987), the dean of suicidology, wrote that one should never make such an important decision as suicide while suicidal, i.e., psychologically distressed. When this decision has been based on social ritual or expectation, on group consensus, the view has ranged from tolerable to celebrated. Rather than being historicist, most histories of suicide have been chronological with the identification of the common thoughts about and practices toward the idea of suicide over time. These histories highlight the complexity and poor understanding of suicide over a great deal of time.

## Biological Suicide

Considerations of an organic component or basis for suicide go back at least a few centuries, but specific research on this did not begin until the 1940s. In 1733 George Cheyne published *The English Malady* and suggested that the English had a “nervous distemper” making them more prone to suicide because of their rich foods, lack of exercise, and city pollution. In his 1758 *A Treatise on Madness*, William Battle mentioned hot, cold, and damp weather as being related to suicide (Colt 1991). It is interesting that even recently Kushner (1989) suggested that the high protein diets of Germans, Austrians, and Danes would lower their serotonin levels, and thus likely contribute to their relatively higher suicide rates.

Shorter (1997) describes two eras of biological psychiatry. The first occurred in the 1800s when a clinical-pathological model was being applied in medical research. This followed from the New Science of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment. Porter (1996a) referred to the nineteenth century as revolutionary for medical science, and as the age of the rise and fall of the asylum (Porter 1996b). Much biological research in psychiatry took place in Germany and Austria during this time, with a focus on tissues, nerves, brains, chemistry, and the use of the microscope. In the 1870s Charcot named “hysteria” and thought it to be organic and genetically transmitted. It was after the influence of Kraepelin, Meyer, and Freud that the second biological psychiatry began, according to Shorter, in the 1970s with the displacing of psychoanalysis as the major paradigm in psychiatry. This was in spite of physical etiologies being considered and treatments being used before then. Genetics became a prevalent model with twin and adoption studies (see Segal 1999). Psychopharmacology also gained a foothold in

psychiatry, beginning in the 1920s but flourishing after the 1950s and 60s. Biological psychiatry is stronger now than it has ever been, from current television commercials for psych meds to this time being called the Age of Prozac.

Motto (1992) found the first modern biological-etiological reference to suicide in 1954, with a high versus low urinary norepinephrine/epinephrine ratio hypothesized to be related to the Freudian turning of anger out versus in, respectively. A 1965 study by Bunney and Fawcett found elevated 17-hydroxycorticosteroid levels in patients who killed themselves, although later studies of noradrenergic activity and suicide have not supported a relationship. Since the 1980s, many studies have linked low 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid (5-HIAA), the serotonin metabolite, with suicide and more violent suicide attempts (see earlier study by Åsberg, Träskman, & Thoren 1976). It is not clear whether low 5-HIAA levels are state or trait, premorbidly, or whether serotonin responds to particular mood states shortly before suicide. Serum cortisol levels were found elevated for suicides by Kreiger (1974), but this has not been replicated (Meltzer & Lowy 1989). The metabolites of dopamine (homovanillic acid) and norepinephrine (3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenolglycol), dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid axis, corticotrophin releasing factor (CRF) levels, cerebrospinal fluid magnesium, and genes have also been studied for suicide, with mixed and inconclusive results (Motto 1992). Studies of the neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine have been associated with mood disorders, however teasing suicide from particular types of disturbed mood in research remains the most significant challenge.

Advances in the biology of suicide continue, and psychologist/suicidologist David Jobes (2003) has recently announced that the “first frontier” of mental illness and suicide



is the study of neuroscience, neurobiology, and genetics. Kay Redfield Jamison, another psychologist, promotes antidepressant medication as suicide prevention around the world in her lectures. She makes the argument for a strong genetic predisposition for suicide, and in her popular recent book on suicide argues that the social variations found for suicide, from seasons to nations, likely parallel the same variations for mental disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, and mania (Jamison 1999). Unfortunately, although Jamison's bibliography is rich, the erroneous absence of any citations in the text makes it difficult to look for the relevant research reports to confirm this assertion.

We are still Cartesian, separating mind from body and, in health-related fields, both from culture. How could neurochemistry not both respond to and affect, or share identity with, thoughts-emotions? There is strong support for individual differences in temperament, likely continuous from birth, which also likely contributes to vulnerability to more extreme mood states and behaviours (Kagan 1998). Yet as humans we are remarkably adaptive, and any deterministic model of human behaviour, whether biological, psychological, or cultural, will be severely limited by this fact. (Lewis 1997). I later propose a middle-level theory of suicide focusing strongly on culture, however I agree with Kagan (1998) that multiple sources of evidence are needed for a deeper understanding of any human phenomenon.

### **Psychological Frames**

The psychological and psychiatric frameworks, which I combine here because of their focus on the individual, dominate the literature in suicide studies or suicidology. A recent book entitled *Essential Papers on Suicide* (Maltzberger & Goldblatt 1996), one of

a series by NYU Press, contains 40 reprinted papers and all but two, one on biology and the other on sociology, neither of which are representative of those disciplines' works on suicide, are on psychology or psychiatry. Psychological topics are also the norm at the annual conferences of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and the American Association of Suicidology, and this has been the case across the histories of the two associations. Psychological approaches to suicidal behaviour have examined a wide range of topics. I will summarize below the five primary theoretical angles addressed by this literature.

*Suicide as escape.* "There is, I believe, a whole class of suicides... who take their own lives not in order to die but to escape confusion, to clear their heads," wrote Alvarez (1990: 54) [1971]. Psychological theories have as one core motivational theme the escape from unbearable consciousness. By 1910 Freud had linked escape from humiliation with suicide (Litman 1970), and later Menninger (1938) highlighted escape as one of the motives behind the act. Shneidman (1985) has identified egression as one of the commonalities across all suicides, and Baechler (1975), Baumeister (1990), and Maris (1992) have focused on escape within their theoretical models of suicide. Baumeister's theory is the most comprehensive, viewing suicide as escape from a despised self. Others have argued that some individuals with enduring psychological defensive styles of escape, who are faced with an unambiguously confronted negative self, under threat or condition of public exposure, may logically select suicide as another yet extreme form of escape (Kral & Johnson 1996). Szasz (1999: 58) has summarized this suicidal scenario as a person who "feels trapped, often because he has suffered a grave defeat."

Psychologically, suicide has been viewed as the avoidance of suffering rather than a longing to be dead.

*Suicide as hopelessness and helplessness.* Hopelessness and helplessness have long been themes in studies of suicide (Farberow & Shneidman 1961; Shneidman, Farberow, & Litman 1970). It has been found that clinicians' ratings of a patient's level of hopelessness, or the same rated by the patient on Beck's Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler 1974), is one of the best longitudinal predictors of eventual suicide among suicidal patients presenting to a clinic (Weishaar & Beck 1992). Suicide is interpreted as giving up, of seeing no positive future and no relief from suffering.

Hopelessness depression has been identified as a subtype of the disorder, characterized by the attribution of one's negative life events to stable and global causes; it involves a particular vulnerability to suicidal ideation and behaviour (Abramson, Metalsky & Alloy 1989). Flipping to its positive side, a focus on hope has become one of the key topics in the new "positive" psychology and the study of well-being and mental health (Carver & Scheier 2002, Gillham 2000, Vaillant 2003).

*Suicide as irrationality.* Suicide as disturbed thinking has also occupied much of the literature, particularly the focus on illogical thinking (Neuringer & Lettieri 1971, Shneidman & Farberow 1970). Within the popular theory of depression as distorted thinking (Beck 1967, 1987), suicide has been studied as the result of cognitive or problem-solving deficits such as rigidity, dichotomous thinking, and "tunnel vision" or the inability to consider alternatives (Adams & Adams 1996, Schotte & Clum 1987). Cognitive-behavioural therapies have been directed for suicidal people, with some

success (Ellis & Newman 1996, Freeman, Reineke, & Beck 1993, Lerner & Clum 1990, Linehan, Armstrong, Suarez, Allmon, & Heard 1991).

*Suicide as symptom.* In the next section suicide is seen as a symptom of community disintegration, where the term “symptom” is used as a heuristic medical metaphor. In psychology and psychiatry, suicidality is typically described as a real symptom of mental illness, e.g., of depression alongside other symptoms in psychiatry’s DSM such as insomnia, fatigue, and weight loss (APA 1994). It is something that “naturally” happens and is inevitable when one crosses one’s threshold of tolerance for subjective distress (Menninger 1938, Motto 1992). Shneidman (1993: 147) has written that “suicide is caused by psychache,” and describes his neologism as being “intrinsically psychological – the pain of excessively felt shame, or guilt, or humiliation, or loneliness, or fear, or angst, or dread of growing old or of dying badly, or whatever... Suicide occurs when the psychache is deemed by that person to be unbearable.”

Suicide is co-morbid with other “symptoms,” particularly impulsivity/aggression, depression, hopelessness, anxiety, and self-consciousness/social disengagement (Conner, Duberstein, Conwell, Seidlitz, & Caine 2001). Research has identified short-term (one year or less) psychological risk factors for completed suicide among Americans. Among depressed patients, the co-occurrence of severe anxiety or agitation, e.g., worry, fear, and panic attacks, becomes a significant short-term predictor of suicide (Fawcett 1999). Further argument for suicide as a symptom comes from studies, largely post-mortem and thus retrospective, indicating that approximately 90% suicides have had a diagnosable mental disorder (Bertolote & Fleischmann 2002; Moscicki 1999). The most common disorder is depression (Blair-West, Cantor, Mellsoy & Eyeson-Annan 1999, Klerman

1987, Hyman & Arana 1989). Suicide thus becomes a reified medical symptom rather than a metaphor, and the cause is largely psychic and sometimes physical “pain” that, in most cases, is associated with a mental disorder. As a symptom, suicide also becomes directly tied to mental disorders and thus causally linked to neurochemical or even DNA dysregulation.

*Suicide as unconscious motivation.* Although he published only a few pages on suicide, Freud’s notion of suicide as outward aggression or anger turned toward the self has become a popular staple regarding the psychology of self-destruction. This was first proposed by Wilhelm Stekel at a meeting in Freud’s apartment in 1910 as a self-directed murderous wish outside of conscious awareness (Shneidman 1969). This more general idea was already well-known; for example in German the term for suicide has long been *selbstmord*, or self-murder. For Freud (1917), suicide made little psychological sense unless, he posited, the self or ego was split such that one kills a separate part of the self that has been identified with a loved and now lost or bad other. Aggression and its management were essential to both suicide and to human functioning in general in his theorizing. Later, Karl Menninger (1933) argued that suicide was motivated by three necessary and sufficient unconscious motivations: the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, and the wish to die. Carl Jung’s analytic psychology has also influenced thinking about suicide. Hillman (1964) wrote that suicide must be understood within the context of a person’s inner mythology, in which he included dreams and fantasies. Suicide is an attempt at transformation and rebirth (Lester 1996a), and motivated by self-protection rather than self-destruction (Kral & Johnson 1996). A psychodynamic approach to suicide examines emotional and cognitive states, close relationships and object loss, both

conscious and unconscious meanings given to death, and defense mechanisms congruent with self-annihilation (Hendin 1991, Maltzberger 1999).

A psychological frame worthy of exploration is that of what I have called “receptive shores,” the openness or vulnerability, depending on one’s stance concerning suicide, to the idea of self-destruction applied to oneself (Kral 1998). It is here where culture and psychology meet, where a social ideology comes to rest in an individual mind, referred to as the process of internalization. Edward Sapir (1934: 414) called this “an important fact, systematically ignored by the cultural anthropologist,” when “we see at once elements of culture that that come well within the horizon of awareness of one individual entirely absent in another individual’s landscape.” If suicide is a cultural idea, to be explored in later sections of this chapter, from motivation to method, how do some individuals take it on as personal script while others ignore it? (see Throop 2003; Carlisle 2008; Kirmayer 2006; Throop 2005; Toomela 1996). The terms culture and internalization are used in biology, and internalization may be too simple a concept for the confluence of mind and culture. It implies a unidirectional movement of something, in this case a thing called culture into a thing called psyche or mind. The questions “why” and “how” are the challenging ones here, and need to capture both the individual mind and collective, popular norms. Regarding suicide, why do some individuals accept the idea into their personal range of choices, and how do popular norms become such?

The concept of psychological vulnerability as correlates found with being suicidal offer a significant clue on the individual side of this equation. Alcohol and drug abuse is one factor, and psychiatric disorders most notably depression are strongly indicated. Shneidman’s concept of perturbation or psychache is, arguable, the underlying

psychological experience behind all demographic and experiential correlates of suicide. Psychological pain leaves one vulnerable, and the current belief including by Shneidman is that this pain *causes* suicide (1993). Elsewhere I have argued that suicide has an origin myth in the mental health professions and among researchers, which is that the *idea for suicide* comes spontaneously from the person's head under certain psychological or even social conditions (Kral 1998). This myth fits with the growing popularity of evolutionary psychology, where some of the more radical thinkers are writing that specific ideas and behaviours such as suicide are innate genetic templates in the brain awakened by environmental or state-psychological stimuli (Tooby & Cosmides 1992). An alternative view sees suicide as an idea internalized from culture (Kral 1994). I have suggested that suicide is a modified function of two conditions originally proposed by Shneidman (1971). Shneidman suggested that perturbation and lethality are the necessary and sufficient conditions for suicide to take place, where perturbation is subjective distress that he now calls psychache, and lethality is a combination of lethality of method and suicidal intent by the person. My modification is to keep perturbation as subjective distress, and call it *motivation* for lowering or ending distress once it reaches a personal threshold of intolerance. The function of perturbation is merely motivational, not causal for a specific behaviour or outcome. That the vast majority of people do not kill themselves when they cross their threshold for perturbation problematizes its direct link to suicide. I begin with the simpler hypothesis that when this threshold is crossed one is motivated to do something about it. The "what" one does is an open concept. This is where culture comes in. Lethality as a cultural schema or model now becomes the *idea of death*, in this case suicide, as the *choice* to end the perturbation. The choices selected to

lower or end the distress are all ideas from one's culture, sometimes creatively re-composed by individuals. Ideas like suicide come from the collectivity of other minds, and as Whitehead (1933) wrote, ideas have consequences. Suicide becomes an idiom of distress through the process of cultural mimesis.

Yet we are still left with wondering which individuals select this idiom, and why. Does it perhaps select them, or is there an interaction, a dialectic, that needs to be explored? One possibility for a dialectical understanding may involve the notion of escape. Suicide, as mentioned, has in the psychological literature been viewed as a form of escape. The motivation for suicide is understood as escape from intolerable distress or consciousness. Baumeister (1990) has argued that suicide is an escape from the self, in this case a negative self that is to be avoided at all costs. This avoidance has included the avoidance of emotions, particularly negative emotions and negative memories. Under severe duress this can include what Baumesister calls cognitive deconstruction, a restricted mode of thinking that... Baumeister's model has a formulaic approach in which all people under an aggregate of certain conditions will become suicidal. I have elsewhere suggested that suicide as escape will be more likely internalized if it fits with escape tendencies of individuals (Kral & Johnson 1996). Culture and mind will meet when they are in synch, when there is an individual openness to particular cultural messages. These are the "semiotic connectives" that Turner (1980) wrote about between elements within a cultural system and these elements with individual personalities. Ed Johnson and I speculated that certain individuals who are more prone to escapist psychological defenses, people who more generally avoid facing their negative selves, might be more inclined to see suicide as but another albeit extreme form of escape. The dynamic



“connectives” would be much the same as what Baumeister described, in which the idea of suicide finds a home. Males, for example, may be more likely to use escapist mechanisms than women, and males have a much higher suicide rate than women in most of the world. Males may thus see suicide as escape as a better fit with their usual defense modes than females.

### **Durkheim, Sociology, and the Collective Force**

Durkheim’s *Le suicide* (1951) [1897] has been the grand sociological treatise on the subject for over a century. Durkheim minimized individual factors as *causally* contributing to suicide, and instead focused on what he called the “collective force” of society (299). Examining suicide statistics, i.e., rates, in great detail for various countries and social groups, he found that they manifested local stability over time yet reliably differentiated groups of people on the basis of nationality, religion, marital status, social ties, and social integration and regulation. He argued that neither details of a person’s immediate situation, such as disappointment or illness, nor a person’s “intrinsic nature” such as personality/temperament or psychiatric disorder, could account for these suicide rates. He found larger social conditions to be related to these rates, and characterized them as types of suicide. Durkheim was a social realist, with his familiar methodological and moral injunction that social facts are “things” (*comme des choses*), concrete entities worthy of attention by the intellectuals of his time. Social facts, “ways of acting, thinking, and feeling...” were “endowed with a power of coercion” and thus had motivational force on the individual (Durkheim 1964: 3 [1938]). *Des choses* was used persuasively to communicate in ordinary language about everyday reality (S.S. Jones, 2001). The

morality behind his vocabulary concerned what he believed was a new way of thinking about society and ethics (R.A. Jones, 2001). Social characteristics related to the incidence of suicide were as real as suicide rates, as real as an individual's death.

The four types of suicide identified by Durkheim were features of collective life corresponding to ways people are more or less connected to each other. Integration and regulation were key concepts of his theory of the social bond, the first tying the individual to society and the second identifying an organizational principle of social groups. At the centre of his theory of suicide was the integration of the person into the collective: "suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the original groups of which the individual forms a part" (Durkheim 1951: 209 [1897]). The first type of suicide was *egoistic*, for those not sufficiently integrated into important social groups such as family within their society. People living alone in cities fell into this group. A second type was *altruistic*, in which, by contrast, people are excessively over-integrated and killed themselves through conformity. War-related or mass suicides would fall into this category. When people are over-regulated, *fatalistic* becomes a third type of suicide whereby the individual loses any sense of control over his or her participation in society. In a study of American suicide notes, Peck (1983) found that a third of them, more than would otherwise be expected in the general population, showed an external locus of control – attributions of one's life being controlled externally rather than through a sense of agency. A fourth type of suicide, caused by under-regulation, was *anomic*. Anomic suicide was caused by excessive and rapid social change that disrupts the regulatory function of norms, expectations, and social life. Durkheim believed that the move toward individualism taking place during his time was having a markedly negative effect on

society, breaking apart families and other bonds that had held people together as a meaningful collective. Anomie was a result of social change caused by urbanization, industrialism, and secularism – modernism – in and of Western society, and suicide was one of the consequences. Durkheim viewed his time as one of collective sadness as a result of this modernism (Stack, 1994). Durkheim might have agreed that he had identified a form of social suffering that today is viewed as caused by social forces (Kleinman, Das & Lock 1997), even though his writing did not reflect current notions of psychic pain.

Durkheim's book on suicide is often attributed to the founding of sociology, a discipline he was seeking to regulate. His influence has been enormous, with societies, journals, books, and a plethora of academic productivity around his ideas and work. I will focus on two of his ideas in particular and link them with more current work on suicide: the notion of collective representations or mentalities, and the kinds of suicide called egoistic and anomic, respectively addressing problems of low social integration and regulation.

### **Collective Representations and *le conscience collective***

When Durkheim (1951 [1897]) wrote of the collective force in *le suicide*, which he described as *le conscience collective* in his 1893 book *The Division of Labour*, he described collective representations as modes of thought in group form. He was thus also an idealist, in addition to a materialist supporter of a social reality. In the earlier work Durkheim (1951: 312 [1897]) argued that “essentially social life is made up of representations,” noting that these representations have their own laws unlike those of

individual representations, and as such should be called social psychology. His *conscience collective* was made up of collective beliefs and sentiments, according to Lukes (1973). Durkheim thus foreshadowed cognitive anthropology. It is important to note here that Durkheim's position centered on mental or cognitive representations at the group or societal/cultural level, which had much to do with group structural solidarity and social regulation. Taylor (1994) argues that he was inconsistent regarding his idealist/cognitive versus materialist/social structural views. Taylor also points out that Durkheim was inconsistent regarding his views about where the individual or psychology fit into his scheme, and shows that he retained the individual in his focus yet pointed to social factors regarding the cause of certain behaviours like suicide. Society was in the individual.

As was common in nineteenth century social discourse, Durkheim (1951 [1897]) used body and medical metaphors to describe social reality: "collective asthenia, or social malaise" representing "the physiological distress of the body social" (214). But Durkheim transferred the locus of attention from the body to the collective through the language of embodiment. Notes Paperno (1997: 43), for Durkheim

"an individual taken singly... is as good as dead, but within the collective personality, the individual receives life. In a similar fashion, the external can become the internal. Thus, what is external for the individual body is internal for the collective body. Moreover, because the individual is absorbed by the collective body, an external state actually becomes an internal state... Within the collective personality, the self is the other."

Material positivism and idealism were thus brought together within the body metaphor, which contained the human mind. For Paperno, the ambiguity between the individual and the collective, the real and the metaphoric, is thus resolved. As Durkheim (1951: 213 [1897]) wrote, “man is double, that is because social man superimposes himself upon physical man.”

That Durkheim kept the individual within his theoretical frame is seen in the emphasis on integration with regard to suicide. It was obvious that only the individual can decide on and perform this act, so Durkheim saw societal reasons centered on the move toward individualism that would account for the social disconnect he linked to individual vulnerability. A disconnect is also seen in his fatalistic type of suicide, where the person is disconnected from participating meaningfully in the larger social group (Lukes, 1973, p, 232, indicates that while Durkheim was a socialist of his own kind, he only once and very briefly discussed any link to Marxism). Durkheim’s dissertation was on the relationship between individualism and socialism, and while he focused on the latter he did not dismiss persons in spite of later accusations of this. His critique of individualism concerned primarily the breakdown of social solidarity rather than a critique of psychological aspects of suicide. Even in his “debate” with sociologist Gabriel Tarde, a methodological individualist who saw persons at the center of society, Durkheim stated that Tarde had misunderstood him as dismissing the person (Lukes 1973: 303). Even Malinowski accused Durkheim of downplaying the individual while at the same time using “individual psychological explanations” in his theory (Lukes, 1973: 523). Durkheim believed that excessive egoism is the product of social factors, however; the individual trait is cut “out of whole cloth” (Pope, 1976: 18).

Individual mental representations were thus based on, or modeled after, social representations. For Durkheim, social representations made up social reality: “nous avons dit expressément et répété de toutes les manières que la vie sociale était toute entière faite des représentations” (cited from *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* in S.S. Jones, 2001: 303). Shared representations for Durkheim are social institutions, argues Bloor (2001: 338), and as the “currency of interaction” they are constitutive of such interactions. Representations are socially constructed, as Durkheim wrote about religion, saying that “sacred beings exist only in and through their representations” and “there is perhaps no collective representation that is not in a sense delusive; religious beliefs are only a special case of a very general law” (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 349, 228). Durkheim noted the relationship between personal and collective representations:

“Solely because society exists, there also exists beyond sensations and images a whole system of representations that possess marvelous properties. By means of them, men understand one another, and minds gain access to one another. They have a kind of force and moral authority by virtue of which they impose themselves upon individual minds. From then on, the individual realizes, at least dimly, that above his private representations there is a world of type-ideas according to which he has to regulate his own; he glimpses a whole intellectual world in which he participates but which is greater than he” (438).

Using more contemporary terms, Durkheim posited that culture is ideational or cognitive, that culture has motivational force and is internalized into individual minds, and that the whole is greater and certainly more complex than the sum of its parts. The individual, according to Durkheim, was embedded in a larger cognitive system.

Durkheim viewed society as static rather than dynamic, as did most anthropologists of his time, and society was ideally organized around an ideational equilibrium or equilibria. This was also the view of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952: 357) in their classic work on culture, whose widely held definition of culture included patterns “of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols,” and had an ideational focus:

“[T]he essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action”.

Unlike Durkheim, as anthropology’s representatives Kroeber and Kluckhohn added the importance of the person: “*Concretely*, [culture] is created by individual organisms operating as a group. It is internalized in individuals and also becomes part of their environment through the medium of other individuals and of cultural products” (367). Yet Durkheim’s influence on Radcliffe-Brown and functionalism in British anthropology (e.g., the integrative functions of myth in society), and on Lévy-Strauss and structuralism in French anthropology, has been enormous (Adams 1998). It is worth noting here that North American anthropology was early on more influenced by German sociology (e.g., via Boas) and the other great sociologist of that time, Max Weber (e.g., via Parsons). Durkheim worked with social statistics at some remove, while Weber contributed *verstehen* to method – the imaginative understanding or empathy of the other – and his view of humans in search of meaning (Lindholm 2001). Weber (1949 [1904]): 81) resembled and perhaps borrowed from Malinowski, for example, when he wrote that “All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always from *particular points of view*”

(italics in original); Hall (1999: 128) cites Weber as the “classic exemplar” of hermeneutics.

The study of collective ideation, however, has been central to anthropology. The linking of such ideation to individuals has been the domain of the subdisciplines of psychological and cognitive anthropology. Ties between anthropology and psychology, disciplines with some fundamentally different epistemologies, were made by earlier anthropologists ranging from Sapir, Mead, Benedict, Rivers, and Malinowski, to Boas (see Stocking 1992). The view of culture as cognition in anthropology is not new, but a smaller number of anthropologists are examining how individual cognition is mediated by culture. Culture and cognition has been included in anthropology’s traditional study of cultural difference, however the newer look is a critique of psychic unity – the assumption that all minds are alike save for cultural content (Shore 1996). These subdisciplines in anthropology investigating culture and mind have employed constructs such as cultural and personal schemas or models. It is a modern version of the Durkheimian notion of collective and individual representations, but with a commitment to the study of how they are mutually constituted (e.g., Cole & Scribner 1974; D’Andrade 1995; Holland & Quinn 1987; Shweder & LeVine 1984; Shweder 2003; Strauss & Quinn 1997), including how culture produces human motivation (D’Andrade & Strauss 1992; Munro, Schumaker & Carr 1997). Psychology has likewise moved in a similar direction with cultural psychology (e.g., Bruner 1990; Farr & Moscovici 1984; Kirchner & Whitson 1997; Resnick, Levine & Teasley 1991; Rosen 1995), including social psychology’s re-discovery of social representations (Moscovici 1981; Billig 1988; Deaux & Philogène 2001). Such work in anthropology and psychology is still relatively



marginalized within each of these disciplines, however studies at their crossroads are on the rise.

### **Anomie and Egoism**

Although much can be said about suicide related to over-regulation (fatalism) and over-integration (altruism), more attention has been paid in the literature to low regulation (anomie) or low integration (egoism) and suicide given that these are said to be more common social factors in Western democratic societies (Johnson 1965). Indeed, as mentioned previously, Durkheim (1951 [1897]) was particularly concerned with modern aspects of society and their negative effects on one's sense of belonging and direction or hope within a larger set of relationships and social structure. He viewed anomic and egoistic suicides as having "kindred ties," with anomie leaving individual passions without a "check-rein" and egoism leaving people without meaning (258). Anomie "disorients and disconcerts" while egoism "agitates and exasperates" (382). Both were products of the modern society, and Durkheim (368) argued that they explained the three to fivefold increase in suicide during the half-century preceding his book's publication in 1897.

Anomie has been interpreted by most scholars as normlessness together with failed expectations. Rapid and uncontrolled social change, according to Durkheim, produced a crisis leading to anomie and vulnerability to suicide. LaCapra (2001) sees anomie as caused by "runaway change" at the social level. Anomie stems from, in Tomasi's (2000) interpretation of Durkheim, boundless and unsatisfied moral needs. Parsons (1960:124) defined norms as "generalized patterns of expectation" which differ

across groups within a social system. Anomie would thus be a breakdown of expectations and hope. Mestrovic (1992) discussed anomie as unsatisfied human desires, noting that entire collectives will experience this if their expectations, set by a more powerful majority “in-group,” cannot be met because of their “out-group” status. “New hopes constantly awake, only to be deceived, leaving a trail of weariness and disillusionment behind them” (Durkheim, 1951: 271 [1897]). Rapid social change thus leads to demoralization and the inability to meet new expectations. Anomie, together with its close relative alienation, are social conditions leading to a perturbed mental state (Lukes 1977).

It turns out that, from the data available, Western cultures continue to have higher suicide rates than non-Western ones. “Westernizing” cultures in the midst of high-speed social change generally have very high suicide rates among their youth. Examining quality of life and suicide across 43 nations, Lester (1996b) found a positive correlation between the two with the most predictive quality of life variables to be health, wealth, and education. These are central features of Western society. In a review of the literature on the relationship between suicide and unmet expectations, Baumeister (1991) found that suicides are higher among those whose higher-than-average expectations were met with poor outcomes. Suicide rates are higher among economically prosperous countries, countries or even states with higher standards of living, countries with “better” climates, and in North America in the late spring/early summer when the weather is improving. Rates are higher among college students than their peers not in college, and among students with above average grades whose grades have dropped. A drop in the standard of living, seen in an increase in suicide in the US during periods of economic depression

or recession, is a social suicide risk factor. Baumeister found that setbacks and downward turns were common in suicides. Recently divorced or separated people have higher suicide rates (Breault & Kposowa 2000), as do widowed men (Besnard 2000). So do persons with deteriorating health or work situations (Motto 1980).

Egoism, or social alienation, has likewise received empirical support. While Durkheim argued that religion was a prophylactic against suicide, especially the Jewish and Catholic faiths, studies have found that it is a person's integration into religious groups that decreases suicide risk among those religiously inclined rather than type of religion per se or even personal faith in a god (Pescosolido 1990). There was a significant decrease in suicide during the first two world wars, and Durkheim stated that "great popular wars arouse collective sentiments" (1951: 208). He believed that a strongly integrated society "forbids" suicides because individuals are at its service, committed to working for each other (209). This may explain the success of Napoleon's warning to his soldiers referred to earlier. An integrated society provides an individual "solidarity with collective existence" (374). Measures of social disintegration are found to be positively associated with suicide rates from around the world (Lester 1996b). Egoistic suicide, according to Durkheim, was caused by "excessive individualism" (1951: 209 [1897]). Breault (1994) also indicates much research support for a relationship between low integration and suicide, and adds that focus would wisely turn to psychological aspects of this. It is interesting that a prominent psychologist has recently attributed American individualism to being the major factor in what he calls the current epidemic of depression (Seligman 2000).

## **Besides Durkheim**

The sociology of suicide is thus founded on Durkheim. Most sociological research on the topic has continued to be statistical with a focus on demographic correlates. Steven Stack (2000a, 2000b), the most prolific researcher on the sociology of suicide over the last two decades, recently conducted a systematic review of the sociological research on suicide. The Durkheimian notion of poor social integration and suicide is generally supported. Modernization as economic development is associated with an increase in suicide, likely related to poverty or economic loss, while other variables such as increase in telephones, education, and urbanization have received mixed support. A curvilinear effect is found for urbanization, with an initial increase in suicides followed by a plateau. Age and suicide are correlated where a particular age group has fewer social and/or material resources. Marriage is still generally protective, and suicides rates are higher for divorced men. Religion, as mentioned earlier, is protective when it involves active integration with a religious community. Islam has been identified as a particular case example of high religious community integration and low suicide. Major wars show lower suicide rates, but the variables accounting for this appear to be lowered unemployment and alcoholism during these times. Male suicide rates continue to be higher than female rates in most countries, and this gap has been widening due to an overall slight decrease in female suicide. There is little agreement on an interpretation of this sex difference. A general inverse relationship is observed between social/economic class and suicide, however certain high-class occupations demonstrate a higher suicide rate (e.g., dentists, physicians).

There is also support for Gabrielle Tarde (1904), Durkheim's rival, concerning imitation in studies of media reporting of suicide, which is discussed in a later section. One example here will demonstrate this effect. The bestselling book *Final Exit*, a how-to manual for suicide published in 1991, has been attributed to a 313% increase in suicide by asphyxiation in New York City. Overdose plus plastic bag over the head was the most recommended method in this book, and during one time period shortly after its publication over 27% of suicides were found with a copy of the book next to them (Marzuk et al. 1993). This was true of Bruno Bettelheim's suicide, for example.

The sociological framework for suicide has thus found suicide to be higher among those who are less integrated into a strong social system. Durkheim's theory of social integration and regulation has held up well in research on suicide (Lester & Yang 1998). Sociological research has examined demographic characteristics which support the theory. A critique of Durkheim has been that social forces do not account for individual differences or for the fact that the vast majority of people in high-risk circumstances, or who even cumulatively demonstrate various demographic/social risk factors, do not commit suicide.

### **Culture, Anthropology, and Suicide**

This section on anthropology is an appropriate bookend to the one on history at the beginning of this chapter, as both are cultural perspectives that I hope will demonstrate this needed conceptual direction for suicide studies. A culture approach to suicide has been absent in the mainstream suicidology literature, and anthropological studies of suicide are rare. The recent book *Essential Papers On Suicide*, mentioned

earlier, does not include one from anthropology. A search using the keyword suicide in the Human Relations Area Files at Yale, however, produces 1,593 uses across 506 documents, and someone has yet to review suicide in this massive anthropological database. In this section I briefly review suicide from an anthropological point of view.

Providing an anthropological view of suicide in Perlin's *Handbook for the Study of Suicide*, Jean LaFontaine (1975) noted the importance of examining cultural values, indicating that anthropology's focus has been on social values and structure related to the incidence of suicide. LaFontaine identifies the effects of social forces on the individual as anthropology's domain, foregrounded against significant knowledge of the societies in question. His review of the research found support for Durkheim's theory of integration. LaFontaine's approach is a structural one, arguing that person categories within the organization of society represent how anthropologists should study suicide. His structuralist review, however, just preceded the interpretive turning point in the social sciences and anthropology.

A review of suicide among "primitive peoples" was provided by Steinmetz (1894) over a century ago. Surveying reports from around the world, he described forty-two cases and accounted for the reasons attributed to the suicides by the anthropologists and others who wrote these stories. Steinmetz found offended pride to be the most common motive, together with love, sorrow, fear of slavery and captivity, depression due to disappointment, illness, and family quarrels. He noted that most of these reasons are similar to those found for suicide in Western societies, and quarreled with Morselli's (1882) argument that suicide was more common among "civilized" people. None of the cases described had been accompanied by an ethnographic analysis, and systematic

details of this method were not yet developed. However, a number of particularities concerning reasons and methods for suicide specific to the various cultures were mentioned, indicating that suicide was also a phenomenon in form and function shaped by the local culture.

Malinowski (1926) provided an early ethnographic analysis of several cases of suicide among the Trobriand people. One, a young man, throws himself from a palm tree (*lo'u*). The method details of dress, speech and wailing prior to the jump followed Trobriand custom, after public denouncement of his incestuous affair with a first cousin. Malinowski fits this suicide into Trobriand beliefs and institutions, including village organization, tensions related to clan membership, and local law concerning exogamy and its breach. The young man chose one of two options for such a breach, the other being a ritual of spells and rites that might have exonerated him. Malinowski did not discuss why suicide was selected in this case, but reported death as having been the man's "only one means of escape" (78). Choosing one of two common fatal forms of suicide, the other being poison from the gall-bladder of a globe-fish, would take place within an "underlying attitude [that] is somewhat complex, embracing a desire of self-punishment, revenge, re-habilitation, and sentimental grievance" (95). A less lethal method by vegetable poison used for stunning fish, treated successfully by induced vomiting, was common for cases of "lovers' quarrels, matrimonial differences, and similar cases" (94). "Thus suicide, like sorcery, is a means of keeping the natives to the strict observance of the law, a means of preventing people from extreme and unusual types of behaviour" (98).

Much of early twentieth century American anthropology concerned itself with Native American peoples. Voegelin (1937) reviewed cases of suicide among tribes of northeastern California and found three patterns based on known, yet reluctantly told to outsiders, stories over time. The first was described as an “old and elaborately patterned form” of suicide by the Wintu, following gambling loss or a dispute with one’s mate, where the person, usually a male, would leave to a place by water and stay for days, diving repeatedly to the bottom until eventually drowning, and the body never being found (1937: 445). A second pattern was around romantic disappointment and jealousy, followed by hanging by women and drowning by men; a third type was for the same reason but the method of death was by eating wild parsnip root. Wyman and Thorne (1945) described suicide among the Navaho, and through a set of key informants found it to have been rare but related primarily first to romantic jealousy and quarreling or grief after losing relatives, and secondly to avoidance of consequences for crime or illness. On Navaho suicide, Kluckhohn (1944) argued that it be more broadly understood within the context of the individual and culture change.

Iroquois and Algonquian suicide over a 300 year period in the Great Lakes and eastern Woodlands region was described by Fenton (1941), who also reported several common patterns. Suicide was relatively infrequent, averaging about one every nine years save for a few suicide epidemics. Between 1635-1650 apparently 20,000 Hurons killed themselves secondary to a smallpox epidemic, religious conversion by Jesuits, and “torture and persecution” by the Albany Dutch (122). Male suicide predominated except for the Saulteaux, where women suicides outnumbered those of men. Male suicides were younger warriors, gamblers, or drunks, whereas women were



middle-aged and their suicides were related to their being deserted or mistreated by their men, as revenge out of jealousy and betrayal in romantic relationships or to escape marriage. Suicide following a spouse's death was not uncommon among the Iroquois, and Fenton attributes this to Iroquois love and respect for their dead. Martyrdom was known in warfare and captivity, yet Iroquois, Algonkians, and Sioux were also known to have killed themselves to avoid capture. Suicide among the ill during smallpox epidemics was also reported among the Algonkin, Ojibwa, Saulteaux, and Pottawatomi. Suicide and attempted suicide was known to take place among Native children in missionary residential schools under conditions of abuse and unhappiness (Devens 1992, Milloy 1999). Summarizing the reported reasons for suicide among Native groups, Fenton indicates their order of frequency as loss of status, avoidance of physical suffering, and jealousy/unfaithfulness in romantic relationships. He notes that Iroquois consistently stated that love was the only legitimate reason for suicide, yet argues that pre-Christian attitudes toward suicide among them would be very difficult to ascertain. Romantic problems have long been associated with suicide; Turner (2001 [1894]: 187) wrote about the Inuit of Ungava of northern Nunavik that "remorse and disappointed love are the only causes of suicide." While the attitude toward suicide may have been ambivalent given contradictions within Native cultures, Fenton points out that it became openly hostile with the coming of Christianity. As with other Native traditions, however, Fenton indicated that there was a remarkable consistency in suicide motives and methods over a long period of time.

In more recent colonial times, suicide among Native North Americans has been extremely high in some communities. Those at highest risk have been primarily males

between the ages of 15-24. While elderly White males are at the highest demographic risk for suicide in mainstream North American society, suicide is still rare among Native elders; it is strong tradition that elders are held at the highest level of respect in Native society. If this tradition changes, I suspect that suicide among Native elders will begin to climb. Berlin (1987) found that among Native Americans in the US southwest, those with the highest suicide rates were the least connected to their traditional cultural values. A more complex analysis of Native American suicide by Bachman (1992) found that culture conflict, which he defined as a community holding onto traditional values while experiencing Westernization and social change, was associated with higher suicide rates. This pattern, together with poverty and unemployment, was found among the Native communities with the higher rates of suicide. A similar pattern was found for Inuit in Greenland by Bjerregaard and Curtis (2003), who found that Inuit having both traditional and Western lifestyles had higher suicide rates than those holding more strongly to one or the other. Inuit in Greenland, Nunavut, and the northwest coast of Alaska have an extremely high rate of suicide among their youth. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) found that suicide among First Nations in British Columbia was strongly and positively related to communities not having control over their social, educational, health, traditional, and other local institutions and practices. These authors interpreted this as a problem of cultural continuity, which I would interpret as a problem of community control or collective agency. It is important to note here that recent reviews from a cultural perspective have indicated that suicide among Native North Americans must be understood within the context of community powerlessness, identity diffusion, genocide, and rapid social, cultural and economic change (Berlin 1987; EchoHawk 1997; Kirmayer

1994; Kirmayer, Fletcher & Boothroyd, 1998; May & Van Winkle 1994, Sinclair 1998). Support has generally been found for Durkheim's theory of social integration/regulation for this population (Lester 1997), and the theoretical model for suicide in the literature on Native suicide has generally focused on the subculture of violence where suicide and other violent behaviours are seen as culturally learned and acceptable responses (Bachman 1992).

Some anthropologists have questioned Durkheim's four types of suicide, suggesting that not all suicides fit into his scheme. Bohannon (1960a) claims that one study found a "Samsonic" type of suicide as revenge in Africa, with the ghost going after a living person (Jeffreys 1952). Most studies of African suicide, however, have supported Durkheim in terms of poor social integration among those killing themselves. Suicides were interpreted by the people in those societies as irrational and not entirely voluntary. Hanging was the most common method. Suicide contagion "expressed in supernatural terms" was also found to be common in East African societies. The effects of rapid Westernization/colonialism varied in that region, with a greater number of suicides when integration was lowered and fewer when social stability increased (Bohannon 1960b: 263).

Studies of suicide in Asia have typically found patterns dissimilar to those in North America and Europe (Headley 1983). Unlike the pattern found in most of the world, suicide is generally higher among women in Asia. In the early 1980s, suicide was generally found to decline with age after about 35 except for Japan, where suicide was U-shaped and higher among younger and older adults. Older adult suicide in Japan has been attributed to changes in attitudes toward the elderly in that country becoming more

negative, with elders playing a less important role in the nuclear family. Japanese suicidal elderly now commonly believe that they are a burden to their family (Takahashi 1997), which has also been found among depressed and suicidal elderly in North America in the context of attitudes of “useless-ism” toward the elderly (Richman 1991:155). Suicide among the elderly has more recently increased among the elderly in Asia, likely in accord with a decrease in respect for this segment of the population.

More recently, there has been a focus on suicide in China. Suicide is more frequent among woman in many areas, whereas in most of the world men’s rates are much higher than those of women. The lowest gender ratio for suicide in the world is found in China (Yip 2001), and Asian-Americans have small sex differences in the incidence of suicide compared with other ethnic groups in the US (GAP Committee on Cultural Psychiatry 1985). The great majority of suicides in China occur in rural areas (93%), with the most common method being one of two popular pesticides or rat poison. Young rural women are the demographic group with the highest suicide rate. Like what is found in most countries, the elderly have high rates in China, however it is five times higher in rural versus urban areas (Phillips, Li & Zhang 2002). Although suicide data are unreliable in China prior to 1987, Phillips and his colleagues report that the suicide rates are likely related to rural modernization. Others speculate that the high female suicide rates are due to the low status of women (Diekstra 1992), their lower education and higher illiteracy (Yip 2001), or poverty and marital difficulties (Li & Baker 1991). Others attribute the young rural female suicides to the strict enforcement of birth quotas and common pressure into abortion or giving up of infants which, in rural China, is contrary to the emphasis there on children and their contribution to family labour (Reardon 2002).

Research looking at Chinese female suicide and pregnancy, abortion, sterilization, and fines for exceeding birth quotas, however, does not support this as the most significant factor although it was present in 16% of recent cases (Phillips, Li, Zhang, & Eddleston 2002). Another study found that mental illness (notably depression) is lower among Chinese suicides, with 63% of suicides so attributed versus over 90% found in many studies elsewhere (Phillips, Yang, Zhang, Wang, Ji, & Zhou 2002). It should be noted that expressions of distress tend toward somatization in China rather than emotional expression, as they do more often in North American and Europe, so one would need to examine the method used to obtain such data (see Kleinman & Kleinman 1985). Some similar risk factors to Western suicide were found for Chinese suicide, including depression, prior suicide attempts, negative life events (in this case primarily economic problems or serious illness or injury, although the most common immediately precipitating factor was a marital dispute), and being close to others with histories of suicidal behaviour.

María Cátedra (1992) has written an ethnographic account of suicide among the Vaqueros of northwestern Spain. Suicide has been common among these people for some time, a group she describes as having a highly coherent cosmology that has remained relatively stable for generations. She situated suicide within the Vaquero concept of death and illness, where illness is strongly associated with death, and death is a midpoint between Vaquero concepts of life and the afterlife. Suicide is meaningful as part of the general loss of *gracia*, or grace, “the pleasure, fun, or interest in living” (138). Loss of *gracia* means that Vaqueros, “although physically alive, are socially and cognitively dead” (351). Those committing suicide were typically without

*gracia* due to a loss or significant worsening of role within the social network. Young women have a high suicide rate, and women lose considerable status and *gracia* after marriage. Being elderly and ill produces the same loss and suicide risk. While dedicated to an emic perspective, Cátedra noted that stories to strangers did not always match what was “really going on.” In their stories to her, Vaqueros attributed mental illness (“suffering from nerves”) to a great many more suicides than she believed was warranted, for example, similar to the findings of the only other study of suicide among these people thirty years earlier. Cátedra placed suicide within Vaquero institutionalized unhappiness, as suggested in her closing words to her book: “An analysis of suicide should make clear cultural perceptions about when it is worth the trouble to live and when it is worth the trouble to die.” Suicide is interpreted as one of a number of culturally constituted behaviours in response to an unhappy life in which one becomes disconnected from regular activity and/or socially disregarded, on the margins. Yet suicide is integrated within the local conception of death, with practices surrounding death highly integrated into Vaqueiro life.

The literature on suicide and culture has mainly been cross-cultural or comparative, primarily using quantitative data. For a comparative picture of suicide this is essential information. Inferences about causality and about the experiences of suicidal individuals across cultures remain, however, inferences based on theory and on often well-informed hunches based on nomothetic data. There is little cultural research on suicide that is “deeper” and “thicker,” on which inferences and theory are derived up from the experiences of the people being studied. Why do young, rural, Chinese women take their lives in such large numbers? Why is there a suicide epidemic among young

Inuit? What are the experiences of First Nations youth in BC communities where community control of essential and cultural services and activities is high, such that suicide is viewed as a less likely option when one is otherwise distressed? There is a paucity of, and significant need for, the ethnographic study of suicide to be able to address these kinds of questions.

Farberow (1975) indicated the importance of knowing about how differences in attitudes toward suicide across cultures influence suicidal behaviours. There is recent evidence that more accepting attitudes toward suicide as an option are highly correlated with suicide rates across 35 countries (Stack 1996). Again, these data are telling, but needed are ethnographies such as Cátedra's with the Vaqueiros that will permit a closer understanding of such attitudes within cultural and personal systems of meaning. Counts (1991) described suicide among the Maring of Papua New Guinea, where only women commit this act. She outlines the cultural model and rules for suicide, including collective and personal circumstances leading to the choice of suicide and its particular method. Counts argues that suicide prevention will be impossible, for example, without knowing this cultural patterning. Lutz (1988) has similarly shown how suicide is culturally scripted by the Ifaluk people in Micronesia, sequenced through a particular action (e.g., moral condemnation of another), followed by an emotion (e.g., justifiable anger), which can then lead to suicide, followed by several weeks of sightings of the malicious spirit of the deceased. An anthropological view aims to show how suicide is a part of the life and death of a community, how it is understood by its members.

Firth (1967 [1961]) described scripted suicide methods for indigenous people of Tikopia, an island of Western Polynesia in the southwestern Pacific. The middle-aged

and elderly hanged themselves with a thin cord or fishline by tying the end to a beam in a house and running with force, dying rather quickly. Women, especially younger ones, swam out to sea, while younger men paddled their canoes out to sea. These latter forms of death were interpreted by the people as “splendid” (123) which the spirits would not oppose, yet they would object if men hanged themselves. A common rationale for young people making suicide attempts was to be reprimanded by one’s parents, boys by their fathers in particular. Firth (129) described these as “expected norms” that in turn function “to mitigate parental discipline” by making parents afraid of causing such behaviour.

Ellen Corin (1996) provides insight into how suicide can be seen from what she calls an anthropological imagination. Pointing out that inferences about culture cannot be made easily from cross-national suicide data, Corin argues that, from an anthropological perspective, culture is embedded in all aspects of life and must be examined in this manner. She advises that suicidal “discourse and behavior have to be resituated in the context of the person’s life frame and of his or her position within a collective frame” (216). Life and collective frames hold metonymic relationships at many levels. Interviews with persons of particular groups identified at high and low risk could explore meanings within these frames. A discrepancy between expectations and realities in the context of social change has been one common finding across studies of suicide (Lowe 2003), yet suicide as an option is as culturally scripted as are other choices. Corin suggests that an ethnographic approach to suicide might be studied across three dimensions:

“the sense of future, the perceived relationship between between self and the world, and a feeling of personal value. These three themes could provide a way to



systematize the study of how large-scale transformations, sociopolitical conditions, and the cultural changes associated with modernity and postmodernity affect the lives of... people in particular groups or subgroups particularly at risk for... suicide” (218)

The writing on suicide by Paperno, Cátedra, Counts, and Corin cited above constitutes a cultural anthropological framework that has been otherwise missing in suicidology. A number of scholars have more recently argued that theory in suicidology is largely absent, and the common cliché that suicide is “multidimensional” perpetuates a closed, and in my opinion tail-chasing, approach to the study and understanding of suicide. In the next and final section of this chapter I offer an outline of a model for seeing suicide from a cultural and mimetic point of view.

### **Tarde and Cultural Mimesis**

“The idea of suicide may undoubtedly be communicated by contagion... Perhaps no other phenomenon is more readily contagious” (Durkheim 1951: 131-132 [1897]).

In spite of the quote above, Durkheim (1951 [1897]) was mixed and in fact contradictory about the role of imitation in suicide. Whereas he cited numerous examples of imitative suicide, even of modeling suicide within families, he dismissed imitation as a factor in suicide rates. He believed that imitation was a psychological and not a social factor, and that only individuals can copy other individuals rather than imitation being a larger social phenomenon (140). Yet he referred to suicide as a social representation

when he made the point that many suicides have nothing to do with insanity (67). Even Mauss (1979b: 38) [1950] invoked the idea of internalization of suicide from the collective, albeit only suggestively. Durkheim held a reified notion of collective thought independent of individuals. Yet he argued that suicide is caused by social forces negatively affecting social bonds, and the idea for it comes up as a *natural consequence* within the individual mind so perturbed rather than it being an internalized social representation. This appears to be a contradiction: does the idea of suicide come from outside the person, or from within? Or is it that perturbed individuals are more susceptible to such a social representation? The latter may be what Durkheim was getting at. Durkheim also used a rather strained logic to define imitation, whereby imitation cannot take place in a thinking, reasoning being (129). Imitation would have to be like “the development of a germ introduced into the organism” (128), involving an “act of genuine reproduction” or “ape-like imitation” (125). He took the term literally and believed that imitation should produce an entirely uniform effect on everyone. This is impossible, so he dismissed it as a process. Unfortunately, Durkheim did not elaborate on *how* society enters the individual. I would suggest that Durkheim was motivated to dismiss imitation because that was the primary theoretical angle of the working of culture by his opponent Gabriel Tarde. Besnard (2002) has offered that *le suicide* was written expressly to counter Tarde.

Gabriel Tarde’s position was that social logic and imitation were central to how ideas spread in culture, and to how culture “works.” Lukes (1973: 307) pointed to a primary theoretical difference between Durkheim and Tarde: “to Durkheim’s maxim ‘remove individuals and society remains’ [Tarde] countered, ‘remove the individual and

nothing remains of the social’.” Each represented one of the two main intellectual camps in France at that time, Cartesian positivism or *esprit de system* (Durkheim) and Spontaneity or *esprit de finesse* (Tarde): rationality/objectivity and creativity/subjectivity, respectively. It was Tarde’s inclusion of psychology that aided this attribution to him, and he advocated qualitative methods and time series analysis in particular. Indeed, Latour (2002) has one of Tarde’s major contributions to social theory being the minimizing of micro versus macro distinctions. Tarde’s theorizing was the first social psychology.

Tarde held that social behaviour was imitative, and that imitation was made up of the two basic elements of belief (*la croyance*; cognitive) and desire (*le egree*; affective); he viewed them as interdependent (Tarde 1904). The result of imitation was a “mental imprint” on the individual analogous to a photographic plate; beliefs and desires were internalized through imitation (Clark 1969). Tarde saw belief and desire as “the substance and the force” that, while psychological, become “real social quantities” when activated into organized thoughts and actions through imitation (Tarde 1903 [1890]: 141). Imitation worked as a function of degree of conviction in belief (*le egree de conviction, le egree de croyance*) and emotion (*des egrees de desir*) of model and recipient individuals and nations (Tarde 1904: 28, 37, 70). Tarde also attended to individual differences, and although he did not articulate it to any great extent he postulated strong relationships across personality, imitation, and culture (Clarke 1969).

Tarde’s psychology of social imitation also differed from Durkheim in that rather than having ideas internalized by individuals from a cultural cognitive system, they were internalized by exposure to other individuals. Society and cultural change, according to Tarde (1903 [1890], 1902), was at its core a combination of creative invention and social

imitation. Invention was merely the creative fusion of older ideas, which was then absorbed by others through imitation, suggestion, and contagion. French intellectuals during Tarde's time (e.g., Charcot, Liébeault, Bernheim, Liégeois, Janet, Le Bon, Ribot, Binet) were especially interested in extending the findings concerning hysteria, viewed as a "mimetic disease," and hypnosis to how society works more generally, including the understanding of crime (Valsiner & van der Veer 2000: 43). Imitation was strongly debated as being a central force of social transmission. Tarde began a social psychology with his focus on dyadic interactions being this social synapse.

The diffusionist school in anthropology in the early twentieth century is the discipline's closest theory to that of Tarde's. Contrasting with evolutionism and the idea of independent invention of culture, where different populations would have a propensity to develop similar ideas and artifacts at different rates, diffusionism held that ideas and artifacts were transmitted across populations. Originating in the philological tradition of the eighteenth century that tried to understand the spread of Indo-European languages, diffusionism became popular among German and Austrian geographers/anthropologists of the late nineteenth century and then in Britain until about 1930 (Barnard 2000). It was a way of explaining similarities across disparate cultures. Some anthropologists, e.g., Morgan and Tylor, tried to integrate diffusionism and independent invention as interest moved from how ideas spread to where they originated. Diffusionists were losing credibility to the new functionalism in Britain by about 1920, however, primarily because the origin of culture was increasingly seen as irrelevant given that cultures continue to change. Some extremists in England tried to locate the origin of culture in Egypt, leading to accusations of "culture-theft" by the Greeks and contributing to the rejection and some

ridicule of diffusionism (Harris 1999; see Elliot Smith 1927). Spinden (1927: 54) was not alone when he referred to diffusionist ideas as “flights of childish adventure.”

The diffusion-independent invention controversy was thus doomed to failure because of its focus on the *origin* of culture, coming at a time when there was still considerable intellectual interest in the beginnings of cultural institutions. Yet by the time it was already buried in the mid-twentieth century, Evans-Pritchard had argued that diffusionism was underappreciated in British anthropology (Layton 1997). Even Kroeber (1940) identified a need to understand the process of diffusion better. In North America, diffusionism influenced the development of culture-area studies and regional comparisons, yet it was downplayed except for some quarters of archeology trying to account for cultural origin and change (Kuklick 1996, Trigger 1994, Renfrew 1987). It was an important theory in Eastern European and Russian anthropology, and still maintains influence in the latter (Eriksen & Nielsen 2001). Barnard (2000: 59) writes that diffusionism is currently the least popular theory in social-cultural anthropology, yet “one of the most interesting sets of ideas anthropology has produced.” Globalization studies today bears the most similarity to diffusionism, with little if any acknowledgment of this in the literature (Barnard 2000; Eriksen & Nielsen 2001).

The fading of diffusionism in anthropology may have been an example of the proverbial baby thrown out with the bathwater. Understanding the *process* of cultural influence and determination has long been an important topic in anthropology. Countering the current emphasis on ethnic political identities, Michael Herzfeld (2001: 141) argues that cultures are mixed within all of us at many levels. He suggests that the old diffusionism might have shed this light on our current understanding of culture had

there been a better notion that “ideas, practices and artifacts may spread through social contacts across the surface of the earth according to quite diverse logics, accumulating very different histories.” There are several approaches to cultural equilibrium and change, and to social learning and internalization, that are similar to diffusionism and to Tarde’s theory of social logic and imitation. A brief review will show that suicide can be investigated and, I will argue, better understood, through this cultural lens.

Mimesis, or imitation and mimicry, has long held a place in the literature concerning both the arts and human behaviour – making a recent comeback following about two centuries of dormancy in Western theory (Auerbach 1953, Gebaur & Wulf 1995, Spariosu 1984a). Plato discussed mimesis in *The Republic* in the context of a new, literate, text-oriented culture. He referring to young people learning essentially through imitation of models, and argued the need for appropriate models to be selected for youth. Mimesis involved both “submission to the spell” and “an act of composition which constitutes an act of creation” (Gebaur & Wolf, 1995: 49). Plato warned that there was good and bad mimesis. Aristotle had a similar view of mimesis in his *Poetics*, arguing that learning in childhood begins through mimesis and that it involves a combination of copying and changing the copy. Since Plato, writing about mimesis has involved working with an *idea* through the imitation of models. The concept is related to Wittgenstein’s (1994:49) notion of “family resemblances”, Wundt’s (1916) “folk psychology” (2-3) and “mimetic play” (462), and Durkheim’s *conscience collective*, Tarde’s *la logique sociale*, and ideas about the social self from G.H. Mead (1934), W. James (1890), F. Allport (1924), and C.H. Cooley’s (1902) ideas about the social, looking-glass self. Nelson Goodman (1978: 6) used the term “worldmaking” to refer to the same process:

“Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already in hand; the making is a re-making.” Later, Robert Cantwell (1993: 5) used the term *ethnomimesis* as “that unconscious mimicry through which we take the deposits of a particular influence, tradition, or culture to ourselves and by which others recognize them in us,” adding that “impersonation... is the cultural infrastructure of personality.”

Mimesis as a central mechanism to how culture works has received some attention in recent years. While some psychologists in the early years of the discipline were writing about the mental life of crowds, following Tarde (McDougall 1928), other writers have begun to develop notions of how ideas spread and make up who we are collectively (e.g., Colligan, Pennebaker, & Murphy 1982; Rudé 1995 [1981]; Schank & Abelson 1977; Thomson 1999). Dan Sperber (1996) wrote about culture as cognitive, shared representations that develop through the contagion of ideas, and argued for a study of the epidemiology of representations as a cultural geography of thought (see also Droit & Sperber 1999). J.M. Balkin (1998) has used the idea of software to describe the transmission of ideas as cultural evolution, and there has even been some popular writing about culture change as a series of social epidemics whereby people become infected with ideas that take hold of a population after being set off rather suddenly, often dramatically, by a “tipping point” (Gladwell 2000). We live in worlds of “the culture of the copy,” according to Schwartz (1996), where simulation supersedes duplication yet is apparent in all human affairs.

Whereas the medical and computer language here is being used metaphorically, it is of no surprise that, in our culture, mimesis has for some become a biological reification. The last few years have seen an increase in writing about *memes*, after

Dawkins' (1976) coined the term to describe meme as a replicator, like the gene, propagated via imitation and used as the explanation of cultural transmission of ideas. Memes are literal units of culture that, like genes, are invisible, yet become physically embodied in the human brain. Philosopher Daniel Dennet (1991) believes that mimetic evolution contributes, along with genetic evolution and phenotypic plasticity, to the structure of human consciousness. According to Dennet's "meme's-eye view," the "human mind is itself an artifact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes" (207). Susan Blackmore (1999) further presents memes in the context of evolution, and discusses religion and even the self as "memplexes." Recent critics of what I would call this "biomimetic" memetics provide more coherent argumentation than do these new meme theorists. In keeping with the older definition of mimetics, commonly identified problems are that (a) memes as ideas are never literally copied as per a fax machine, (b) memes as ideas cannot be contained in discrete units, as ideas are never isolated from other ideas, (c) if memes are *non*-biological elements of culture like ideas, idioms, rituals, and recipes, passed on across people to shape and re-shape culture, then this is old news for anthropology, and (d) as has also been long known in anthropology, particular settings and people will play a major part in how much an idea will take hold (Bloch 2000, Kuper 2000, Sperber 2000). Bloch (2000) accuses these mimeticists of ignorance of anthropology, noting that had they become familiar with the seminal writings in the history of the discipline, especially concerning diffusionism, they would have little if anything to say. Given the brief review of diffusionism above, I would second this.

Researchers have found that imitation is a critical form of social learning from



infancy onward (Miller & Dollard 1941, Nadel & Butterworth 1999). Mechanisms of emotional contagion and synchrony across people have been identified (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson 1994). This is reminiscent of Mauss's (1979c: 22) [1950] linking of psychology and sociology through his example of the "contagious character" of rhythm forming one basis of ritual stereotypes. This in spite of Mauss, as Durkheim's faithful nephew, having been critical of Tarde. Some scholars have examined the role of imitation in crime (Lejins 1942), while others have more recently (perhaps somewhat ironically for evolutionary psychologists) attributed imitation to an evolved component of the human brain (Meltzoff & Prinz 2002). The work of French anthropologist René Girard has focused on mimesis and desire (Livingston 1992), resonating with work on culture and motivation mentioned earlier (D'Andrade & Strauss 1992, Munro, Schumaker & Carr 1997). Spariosu (1984b: 86) cites Girard as arguing that psychiatric disorders are "mimetic desires," mimetic crises in the absence of a person's attachment to society's rituals and taboos. Following Plato's moral approach to the topic, Girard (1977) [1972] has such "bad" mimesis leading to repetition-compulsion and the death wish. Anthropologists continue to advance theory of the internalization of cultural models (Throop 2003). It is timely for the concepts of diffusion, mimesis, and internalization to be brought together for a clearer understanding of mind and culture, to further explore, using Obeyesekere's (1990) words, the work of culture.

### **Suicide and Mimesis**

There is now considerable evidence that suicide can be contagious. "Suicide rate up after coverage," read a recent headline in the *Montreal Gazette* (November 17, 2001). Sociologist David Phillips (1974) found evidence that suicide rates were elevated for

about two weeks after the publication of news stories of persons killing themselves within the newspaper's readership area. Phillips named this the "Werther Effect" after the hero of Goethe's tragic novel who killed himself because of an unrequited love. Legend has it that the book was banned by the German government after many young men began to kill themselves, often dressing and shooting themselves in the manner of Werther. This media contagion effect is now well known, and news stories today rarely cover suicides. It is interesting that media contagion of social problems was also part of the discourse in France in the later 1800s (Valsiner & van der Veen 2000).

The suicide-by-media effect has the largest effect on youth and then the elderly, mostly males, following descriptions of specific suicides by movie celebrities, followed by political celebrities, and less but still significantly so by persons with identified mental disorders. The new suicides subsequent to these stories typically have characteristics similar to the suicides reported (Gould & Shaffer 1986, Gundlach & Stack 1990, Phillips, Lesnya & Paight 1992, Stack 2000c). It is worth noting that Neal Miller and John Dollard (1941: 264), a psychologist and anthropologist writing about the psychology of diffusion over sixty years ago, made a similar observation: "The more nearly the copier and the model share their social habits, the more easy is the copying transaction." Suicide contagion research has focused almost exclusively on media reporting of suicide, and this literature has not been integrated with anthropological theory or research, nor with theory of suicide.

Suicide has also appeared in clusters throughout history (Colt 1991, Davidson 1989, Gould, Wallerstein & Davidson 1989). The Centers for Disease Control has published a plan for the prevention of suicide clusters in communities (Gould,

Wallerstein & Davidson 1989), and more recently, in collaboration with other agencies (e.g., NIMH, Office of the Surgeon General, World Health Organization), guidelines for the reporting of suicide for the media in an attempt to offset contagion effects (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2002). The method of suicide is culturally scripted for particular communities or geographic regions cross-sectionally (Farberow 1975, Kral & Walsh 2000, La Fontaine 1975), and the most popular methods can also change over time within one population (Burvill 1989, Chotai, Renberg, & Jacobsson 2002, Kreitman 1976, Lester 1990). Suicide has been found to run in families, and together with evidence that suicidal ideation and behaviour is more common among those who have experienced suicidal behaviour of close others, it appears to be a better social learning rather than a genetic explanation that suicide begets suicide (Brent et al. 2003, Qin, Agerbo & Mortensen 2003, Runeson & Åsberg 2003).

Mass suicide, the concurrent suicide of all members of a social group, has also been studied. In a review of the literature, Mancinelli, Comparelli, Girardi, and Tatarelli (2002) found evidence of mass suicides as early as the second century BCE in the context of a slave uprising. These authors categorized mass suicides into two groups they called exogenous and endogenous. Up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they found that most mass suicides were of the exogenous type, in response to externally forced social change including among Africans during British colonization of Guyana. Mass suicides of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century were classified as endogenous, all comprising religious sects and what the authors called “a distorted evaluation of reality” (91). It is interesting to note that even among a large group of people committing suicide together, the causal attribution for

these authors is internal and psychological, based on irrational judgment from which suicide somehow emerges.

Rather than treating suicide contagion and clusters as a form of (tragic) error variance, to use statistical language, I believe that the social and cultural influence on suicide should be seen as a main effect. It tells us a great deal about the phenomenon of suicide. To be sure, the prevention efforts by the CDC and others are to be commended. But they actually get at the heart of the matter. I have already mentioned the strong relationship between attitudes toward suicide and suicide rates, and personal exposure to the suicidal behaviour of close others and one's own attitudes and behaviour concerning suicide. Suicide by cluster and contagion may be at the centre of understanding this phenomenon. Even biologically oriented suicidologists mention the imitative and contagious aspect of suicide (e.g., Jamison 1999), yet it remains to be theorized within the field.

Ethnographic investigation of suicide will advance our knowledge of both that behaviour and of cultural internalization. A focus on subjectivity within the life and collective frames outlined by Corin (1996) can begin to address the relationship between suicide risk factors, both demographic and psychological, and cultural forces and models. Personal and collective representations or models regarding suicide and their links to other models can be thus examined. One can investigate aspects of conscious awareness of some of these representations and their relationship to things personal, and then also examine symbolic relationships among various models and practices. For example, in my previous research on suicide among the Inuit, suicide was strongly related to problems in romantic relationships among youth and within these relationships to

experiences of anger and betrayal (Kral 2003). Subsequent work on this in my dissertation will focus on both subjective experiences and collective models of sexuality and romance among Inuit youth, and on changes in these models over the last three generations during which time culture change has been rapid. The social disconnect of Durkheim's egoism can be looked at through the experience of what Buie and Maltzberger (1989) have called the "aloneness" of suicidal people. The disorientation described by Durkheim of anomie can be studied among those whose worlds continue to be rapidly changed by larger social and political forces. It is ethnography's view from within that should allow suicide to be understood from a psychological-anthropological perspective.

Suicide will also make for a very good case study of cultural mimesis. A challenge remains regarding how to best study mimesis and internalization, especially when these more abstract concepts are not easily conceived or articulated at the subjective level. Tarde had recommended looking at ideas over time to investigate the process of mimesis. Both longitudinal and age-based, cross-section designs would address internalization along the lines of Sperber's epidemiology of representations. Ethnography would allow the exploration of the internal part of internalization, the personal salience and meanings of suicide, related ideas, emotions, and their interplay, together with their links to collective beliefs and practices.

I hope to have communicated in this chapter the importance of studying the relationship of culture to suicide, and of looking at both culture and mind in this context. Culture and anthropology have not been well integrated into suicidology because their variables are not easily amenable to operationalization, let alone measurement and

quantification, the usual modes of analysis in that field. Ethnography employs a different analytic method. Yet the richness of human and cultural life as studied through anthropology, examined in relation to a situated psychology, will produce needed albeit complex knowledge about how and why suicide becomes a choice.

## Appendix II

### Ethics Board Office Certificate



**Research Ethics Board Office**  
McGill University  
845 Sherbrooke Street West  
James Administration Bldg., rm 429  
Montreal, QC H3A 2T5

Tel: (514) 398-6831  
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Ethics website: [www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics/human](http://www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics/human)

#### **Research Ethics Board I** **Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans**

**REB File #:** 71-1104

**Project Title:** Transforming communities: suicide, agency and reclamation among Inuit in Nunavut


**Applicant's Name:** Dr. Michael Kral      **Department:** Anthropology

**Status:** Ph.D. student      **Supervisor's Name (if applicable):** Dr. Allan Young

**Granting Agency and Title (if applicable):** SSHRC PDF-Kinship, colonialism and well-being among the Inuit; Canadian Polar Commission Scholarship-Suicide and well-being among Inuit youth in Nunavut

This project was reviewed on November 22, 2004 by

Expedited Review \_\_\_\_\_  
Full Review ☒

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Date

18 DEC 2004

John Galaty, Ph.D.  
Chair, REB I

**Approval Period:** Dec 6, 2004 to Dec 5, 2005

All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. An Annual Report/Request for Renewal form should be submitted at least one month before the above expiry date. If a project has been completed or terminated for any reason before the expiry date, a Final Report form must be submitted. Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received. This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects.

cc: ANTHROPOLOGY DEPT.  
Dr. A. Young

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