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Tracey Kathleen Burke

Social Services in Rural Alaska:
An Ethnography of Service Provision in a Yup'ik Eskimo Community

By

Tracey Kathleen Burke

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of the requirements for the degree of

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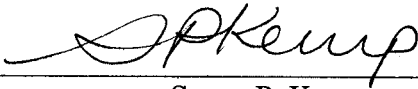
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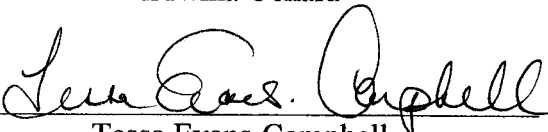
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Abstract

Social Services in Rural Alaska:
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This dissertation is an ethnography of the lived experience of contemporary social work in a Yup'ik (Eskimo) village. Despite efforts to increase "cultural competence," there has been little systematic investigation of the everyday meaning of formal social work/social services in the lives of rural Alaska Natives. This research addresses that gap by examining current service systems and local, culturally-informed perceptions of need and appropriate responses.

I conducted fieldwork in one Bering Sea village. I used participant-observation and multiple conducted ethnographic interviews with various community members, especially the local social service providers and others involved with specific cases. Data consist of fieldnotes, interview transcriptions, and pre-existing documents. I adapted grounded theory and discourse analysis techniques for analysis. I returned to the village to conduct follow-up interviews and to present the initial findings to key informants, and I presented the elaborated findings to the tribal Human Research committee.

I developed a schema of how the community thinks about "social problems" and responses to them, with an emphasis on the roles of formal professional (typically Anglo) and paraprofessional (typically Yup'ik) service providers. I used a composite case study to elaborate the schema and discuss issues of fit between the service systems and local culture; in particular, how responses internal to the village and interventions that require leaving the village are activated and utilized.

Though a white woman reluctant to make declarative statements about what "should" happen with social services practice or organizational policy, I suggest issues worth focused discussion by community members, tribal agency staff, and social work professionals.

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Glossary

agutaq – “Eskimo ice cream”

ellam yua – person of the universe, sometimes God

ihuma – the combination of wisdom, stability, responsibility, and amiability that characterizes adults (Inuit word from Canada)

kumayak – suspicion, especially as related to excessive surveillance

kuss’aq – non-Native, white person, Anglo

mukluks – skin boots

nallik- – concern or pity and nurturance, especially as from an adult towards a child (Inuit word base)

qanrucista – “someone who talks to someone and gives advice,” perhaps also someone who listens to another’s problems

qasgiq – traditional Yup’ik communal men’s house

selaviq – Orthodox Christmas celebration

unga- – a child’s yearning for its *nallik-* figure (Inuit word base)

yua – the “person” of animals

yuuyaraq – “the right way to live” especially prescriptions and proscriptions for appreciating the interconnectedness of living beings and actions

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Special thanks go to the people of the real Unegkumuit, especially those I call Carol, Jerry, Ethan, and Jack. Your commitment, insights, and patience made this project possible. Thanks go also to the agencies, service providers, and friends in Bethel for your support before and during this research – and I trust after it as well, as I return home to Alaska for good.

Many thanks, too, to my committee, whose complementary kinds of expertise added immeasurably to the dissertation. Beyond this particular project, "Uncle Tony" reminded me to play some. And having Susan as a supervisor/colleague/friend in a variety of settings has been crucial to my overall growth as a scholar and teacher, not least through her everyday demonstration that social work and academia really can be compatible.

Friends and family in Seattle and around the country helped me stay sane. Special thanks to my parents, Mimi, Wiz, and Amber for the long-distance support and help through the rough periods.

Chapter One: Introduction

After more than a century of relations with outsiders, Alaska Natives are actively pursuing increased sovereignty and self-determination. Land rights and subsistence hunting and fishing are the prototypical sites for sovereignty discourse in Alaska. However, social welfare services provide another, less-noticed mechanism for the state as an entity and for non-Native representatives of the state and its institutions to impinge on Native lives. Usually associated with the less politically charged discourse of cultural competence, social work and social service provision also constitute a potential field for the everyday contestation and negotiation of Native sovereignty.

That there are serious social problems in Alaska Native communities has been well documented (e.g. AFN, 1989; Cunningham, 1995; Green et al., 1999; Minton & Soule, 1990; Shinkwin & Pete, 1982; Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Human behavior and family health issues commonly addressed by social workers such as suicide, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and alcohol abuse are among the most frequently identified problems. More recently, scholars and activists have also recognized the impact of historical trauma on Native peoples (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Napoleon & commentators, 1991; Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002). The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) has responded politically. First the AFN prepared a statistics-filled “Call for Action” (AFN, 1989),

which impelled the U.S. Congress to sponsor a commission to assess the condition of Alaska Natives. The AFN then developed a series of policy recommendations based on the commission's report and related studies (AFN, 1999).

At the level of social services, social work as a profession and specific public, private, and tribal agencies recognize that rural Alaska Native communities require responses to these social problems that take into consideration their cultural uniqueness and geographic isolation. One popular strategy has been to rely on Native paraprofessional service providers instead of, or at least in addition to, non-Native professionals. People *of the community*, given some training, will bridge the cultural gap, managers have reasoned (Minton & Soule, 1990). Supporting these efforts is a growing body of research, often relying on the traditional wisdom of Elders, about past forms and/or current cultural ideals of interpersonal helping among Native peoples around the U.S. (e.g. Herring, 1999; A. M. McLean, 1997; Oosten, 2002; Rolland, 1994; Summary & Recommendations of the 1998 Rural Human Services Summit, 1998; Voss, Douville, Little Soldier, & White Hat, 1999) – for which Native paraprofessionals are expected to be especially well-suited.

Until now, however, there has been little systematic investigation of what formal social work/social service means in the lives of Native people on an everyday basis. Prevailing social work paradigms have their origins in the urban Lower 48 U.S. states and the United Kingdom, and we cannot assume that interventions designed elsewhere, even when adapted for local needs, are in fact sufficient or appropriate. Furthermore, policy and organizational constraints limit

the extent to which interventions can be adapted; for example, funding streams shape the services which can be offered.

Having spent several years as an itinerant school social worker in southwestern Alaska Native villages, I have had personal experience with social service systems and policies which were designed in and for the contiguous states, especially their urban areas, and which were implemented with at best minor changes in a very different environment. I have worked closely with Alaska Native social service professionals and paraprofessionals, who literally embody both cultures in their work, gaining informal insights into their experience of social work. I have listened to the stories of some paraprofessionals who struggled with their jobs and considered leaving social services because professional and local cultural expectations conflicted too much. It was a growing conviction that surely Native people need not find it so *hard* to engage in social work in their villages that led me to doctoral studies and this dissertation.

Purpose of this study

This research is an ethnography of social services in one Central Yup'ik (Eskimo) village, "Unegkumuit,"¹ located on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta on the Bering Sea coast. From the outset, these have been the central questions and concerns of the research: how do professional social work and local, Yup'ik cultural expectations complement and conflict with each other, and how are cultural

¹ The names of the village and all study participants have been changed to protect confidentiality. Identifying details have been changed as well.

differences locally encountered and negotiated at the level of everyday practice? How do the agencies and systems that provide social services, and that rely largely on paraprofessionals, actually function at the village level? How do local people navigate the boundaries between traditional and non-traditional helping systems? Ultimately, how might policies and service systems be changed to improve the fit between traditional and western models of helping? Sovereignty is not mentioned in these questions; frankly, it is an issue that, as a white professional, I hoped to avoid. But as will become clear in these chapters, I could not.

There is reason to be suspicious of whether social services, even as currently adapted and implemented, do fit in Alaska Native villages. First, empirical studies indicate that professional and western constructions of some social problems do not map well onto local understandings, and that language use plays an important role here. For example, O’Neill (1996) found that the DSM-IV criteria for “depression” often missed culturally-specific indicators of very serious depression on the Flathead Indian reservation. Conversely, she found that “Flathead use of English emotional terms, such as depression or loneliness, is informed to a large degree by the concepts, categories, and values that structure Salish [Flathead] emotion terms” (p. 6); as used by the Flathead, therefore, the English words capture something different than what speakers of standard English understand (cf. Manson, 1997).

Likewise, in a cluster of community-controlled studies of locally-identified social problems among rural Alaska Natives, one community determined “that the concept of ‘mental health’ had no equivalent in their native language and was not an

appropriate construct to use” in conducting the research, and didn’t use it (Minton, 1989, p. 6). The same community, however, did identify problems that are associated with professionally defined mental health.

The second reason for caution regarding the fit between social services and Alaska Native communities stems from social work’s own history. A product of western and urban epistemology and values, social work has embedded within it western cultural assumptions. Social work’s primary mission is to ameliorate human suffering, to *help*. Strands of social work have always focused on family and community-level interventions; however, popular strategies of social work practice have promoted western-identified values such as individualism and hierarchy. Following medicine, social work often is practiced with the worker taking on the role of expert within a 1:1 relationship between worker and client. Following psychiatry/psychology, social work often emphasizes clients’ internal mental and emotional processes. Implicitly, through these strategies, and sometimes more explicitly, social work has had a second mission: to promote middle-class, “American” values among the poor and/or culturally distinct. (See Ehrenreich, 1985; Lubove, 1965; Walkowitz, 1999.) At the same time, assumptions of what information workers are entitled to in their assessments of clients and how social workers construct their narratives of need are grounded in western thought and practices of control (Chambon, 1999; Margolin, 1997; Tice, 1998).

Nonetheless, social work is not categorically ill-suited to rural Alaska. Social work’s attention to the “person in the social environment” consistently has

helped distinguish it from other helping professions. American social work has its origins in the Progressive Era, when issues of cultural difference were just beginning to emerge on a national scale. The middle-class white women then engaging in social work (whose families had been in North America long enough to have put aside their own immigrant roots) were less dismissive of difference than many of their contemporaries. A century later, social work espouses an ethic that values, even “celebrates,” cultural difference. That the profession remains unsure how to enact its appreciation in actual service provision could indicate a ready space for critique and redesign.

An investigation of these issues – whether and how social work/social services fit with local Alaska Native cultures and how local Native communities construct problems and engage with services – is theoretically important because social services provide a specific context for thinking about how cultures interpenetrate. These issues are practically important because mainstream social work potentially perpetuates the colonization of Fourth World peoples, indigenous peoples surrounded by “first world” settlers, systems, and states (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000; Beteille, 1998). Thus, I see this project not as a study of Yup’ik or Native people per se but of social work’s twin roles in the ongoing colonization and empowerment of this group of Alaska Natives, and of indigenous peoples more generally. As a social worker in a position to train other workers and to design and implement services, I share the responsibility for making those services as responsive to the local environment as possible.

I focus in this ethnography on three areas: first, how local people construct and identify “problems” such that formal professional and paraprofessional helpers become involved; second, how various responses are mobilized and locally evaluated; and third, how intervention approaches pose particular challenges and opportunities for service providers and communities, how they negotiate them, and how power is distributed in those negotiations. I want to emphasize that although I pay special attention to the local service providers, this study should *not* be read as an evaluation of any individual’s work or agency. The study is about services in the village as a whole; thus, I cut across practice domains and agencies. This is a theoretical as well as a methodological choice, for I did not want to assume that *a priori*, western-derived categories of types of issues and types of interventions would be locally meaningful. Certainly in my own school social work practice in rural, Yup’ik communities, I worked with people across a range of issues, many of which had little direct connection to students’ school success. Happily, this choice to be inclusive of village social services has been affirmed by others, themselves Native, who research ways to improve social work services with Native people – for example, scholars at the University of Washington School of Social Work’s Native Wellness Center (cf. Duran & Duran, 1995).

Overview of the dissertation

In the balance of this chapter, I discuss the theoretical ideas I will draw on through the remainder of the dissertation and my early methodological choices, including disciplinary methods and design. Rather than have a single methods

chapter, a convention in social work dissertations, I include sections on research methods in three chapters as the material is most pertinent.

The second and third chapters consist of a review of the literature about selected issues concerning the Yup'ik, Alaska Natives, and rural Alaska: what do we “know” about these people and this place? Some of the domains discussed – pre-contact life, governance & sovereignty, subsistence, missionary history, language issues, family & human development patterns, and social issues & service systems – may seem rather far afield from social work. However, each section will prove relevant later on. Since the goal of this study is to understand how social services fit into people’s everyday lives, a grasp of other aspects of their lives is important.

The goal of the fourth chapter is to begin to link the issues presented in the broader literature review to the specific research site. Here I provide a sketch of life in the village where I conducted the fieldwork and of the work life of the local social service providers. The description of the providers’ everyday work experiences is new to the field. It is also in this chapter that I discuss the fieldwork itself in some detail.

The meat of the analysis comprises chapter five. By far the longest chapter, it moves from a long case study to a typology of responses to behaviors locally evaluated as remarkable and problematic. The discussion ends with thoughts about how thresholds for different kinds of responses are negotiated. This chapter also includes the final section on methods, detailing the analysis process.

Finally, the sixth chapter revisits some of the more political questions raised in the theoretical and substantive literature reviews. Given the detailed description and analysis preceding this final chapter, here I begin to address social services in rural Alaska as a “hybrid” political practice with implications for self-determination far beyond the well-being of individuals and specific small communities. Although local people have agency within current systems, too often authority remains with organizations outside the village and tribe. I close with thoughts about potentially fruitful directions to pursue in planning social services.

Theoretical orientation & foreshadowed problems

Although I avoided beginning the research with predetermined categories for problems and interventions, I did have specific questions, interests, and conceptual frameworks. Over eighty years ago, Malinowski (1922) commented on the importance of these intellectual tools:

Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results, is not identical with being burdened by “preconceived ideas.” If a man [*sic*] sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his work will be worthless. But the more problems he brings with him into the field, the more he is in the habit of moulding his theories according to facts, and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory, the better he is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but

foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies (pp. 8-9).

I have indicated the questions I brought to the study and will postpone further discussion of how those questions shaped the analysis until chapter 5. However, a discussion of the theoretical ideas that functioned as foreshadowed problems (see also Blumer, 1954, on "sensitizing concepts") is in order, for they provided a particular lens through which I interpreted the data. The intention here is not to get waylaid into an extended philosophical discussion, but simply to highlight the ideas that framed my thinking about culture and social work among a "postcolonial" people.

Colonial studies and postcolonial theory

Colonial studies and postcolonial theory cross the boundaries between the humanities and social sciences to critique "the process of production of knowledge about the Other. As such, they produce forms of knowledge themselves, but other knowledge, better knowledge it is hoped" (Chrisman & Williams, 1994). As a formation within postmodernism/post-structuralism, postcolonial theory resonates with certain attitudes towards social life associated with postmodernism, including: impatience with attempts to find metaphysical truth, appreciation for practical effects as the measure of a proposition's worth, and engagement with the impact of context and contingency.

Orientalism

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is one of the foundational texts of this literature. In it he analyzes western literary, popular, and scholarly texts about the Middle East and traces their effects on actual political and cultural structures. Said contends that the place and people of the Orient have been represented as exotic and inferior; the implicit image of Europe, in contrast, is reinforced as rational and advanced. The unfolding body of images, interpretations, and actions reinforce each other in a "strategic formation" of accumulated "referential power" (p. 20), supporting not just European attitudes but concrete practices of authority. A European or American "comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second....[as] one [who] belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient" (p. 11). Building on Foucault and Gramsci, Said's focus is not whether the portrayal of the Middle East is accurate but rather how the portrayal is created and how it persuades; how alien spaces and their inhabitants are transformed, tamed, for western consumption and control. "The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire" (1978, pp. 202-3). Manifest orientalism – the corpus of popular and scholarly information and interpretation – changes over time; latent orientalism – the underlying assumptions of inferiority and essential otherness – mostly does not (ch. 3). Depiction becomes domestication. That ideas affect the material world is

not a unique insight, but Said was the first to examine its implications for Europe's colonies.

In these terms, Yup'iks and other Alaska Natives are located at the intersection of overlapping orientalist discourses of Alaska, Native Americans, and Eskimos. Images abound for each category. Predominantly the images of white, unhyphenated Americans and Europeans, they speak to the control whites assume they have – and therefore take. One illustration: since Europeans came to North America, and still in contemporary Alaska, they (we) have seen and reported wide open spaces, which has been interpreted as spatial availability and imagined as wilderness awaiting settlers and resource exploitation, both of which have come. At the same time, our “knowledge” of the people indigenous to those spaces has been created, organized, and utilized by whites (e.g., see Spufford, 1997, especially ch. 8). Even when Native people “talk back,” they are heard best when speaking within the terms set out by the western discourse. Said's analysis focuses on the discourse of the west but he does not deny that the colonized do talk back (contra Spivak, 1994); he leaves it to others to explore forms of resistance (e.g. Dirks, 1994; Scott, 1990).

Alaska is not actually a colony, and “postcolonial” not a strictly accurate designation. However, Alaska lies on the geographic and psychological periphery of the nation even as its natural resources are largely controlled by the federal government (Haycox, 2002). Furthermore, Alaska high percentage of Native citizens (16% per the 2000 census, cited in Leask, Killorin, & Martin, 2001). Thus,

parallels between Alaska and former “white settler” colonies are useful. The non-Native population² of Alaska is keenly aware of the distance from the rest of the country, routinely talking of going “to the States” and “outside” when heading to the continental U.S. More pertinent to this study, the position of Alaska Natives within the state and the nation is parallel in important ways to that of other Fourth World peoples such as Australia’s Aborigines and New Zealand’s Maori: “indigenous minorities submerged in a surrounding majority and governed by them” (Mudrooroo, 1995, p. 231). Although Native Americans and Alaska Natives are considered sovereign within specific domains, their relationship to the state and the nation is still uneasy – and still largely subject to the white imagination.

Hybridity

The oft-employed dichotomy white versus Native/indigenous is an artifact of colonialism, but complicating any coherent discourse is the hybridity inherent in the lives of postcolonial people. The racial and cultural contrast is more usefully framed as a continuum with idealized points at the ends where no one lives. As its use in genetics suggests, hybridity refers to the blending of cultures in a constant dialectic: “the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up” (Young, 1995, p. 25). Yet, postcolonial hybridity need not be a neat merge; rather, it also points to an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications,” a liminal space (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4; cf. Hall, 1994). Some degree

² 14% of the state population is comprised of individuals who identified to the census as Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, or bi/multi-racial (Leask et al., 2001).

of hybridity is an unavoidable fact of history; colonization has happened, and there is no return to the uncontaminated systems and cultural practices of the precolonial past – which of course were never static even prior to contact with Europeans.

Important for my purposes is the idea that not only are beliefs and practices blended in a way that destabilizes neat definitions of culture, but that there is often a fuzziness in people's understandings and articulations of beliefs and practices, which can be exploited. Fluid, fuzzy boundaries and rules may provide room to maneuver where clear expectations could be too restrictive. I am thinking here especially of Native hybridity, but the concept applies also to postcolonial whites. For example, Jacobs (1994) locates the efforts of white Australians to align with the Aborigines within the settlers' own sense of colonization. Gaining indigenous knowledge makes them, the settlers, more indigenous, more *of* the place they now live. The settlers necessarily have "a clear agenda to erase this separation of belonging," as another critic explains (Goldie, 1995, p. 234); their choices are either to reject the Natives or to incorporate them. She calls the second process "indigenization." The settlers' implicit right to decide how and how much to indigenize is a signal of their racial and cultural authority, however, for the same control over the process is more problematic for the Fourth World people from whom the settlers borrow (Smith, 1999).

Strategic essentialism

To embrace hybridity would seem to require a rejection of anyone's claims to authenticity (Young, 1995) – *this* is who/what/how *we are* – but Jacobs (1994)

rejects the dualism. (Indeed, an insistence on framing things as dualism is arguably a western move.) She argues that the “interdiscursive political space” of contemporary Australia is only partially “a domain of hybrid identity, for essentialist positions are present both as strategic and internally held realities” (p. 170). Alaska Natives likewise employ strategic essentialism as a tool to resist the effects of others’ power, as in negotiating for control of lands; these essentialist self-descriptions are presented “not [only] as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything” (Spivak & Adamson, 1990, p. 51). Political maneuvers often rely on (the appearance of) group solidarity, often in terms westerners have set out.

Yet essentialism is not only a function of conscious, instrumental political tactics. Jacobs, above, also acknowledged that essentialism is linked to “internally held realities” (see also Smith, 1999, on "authenticity"). There is affective consensus about some generalizations about the group Alaska Natives and/or about sub-groups such as the Yup’ik that group members claim as true and important about themselves, and as consistent with their pasts. In contrast to Bhabha’s (1994) valorization of the “unhomeliness” of global immigrants, for example, Alaska Natives see themselves (and are seen) as *at home*, and a political priority is making staying there practical (cf. Bennett & Blundell, 1995). That Native people can little afford to be wholly unself-conscious about identity and politics (Castile, 1996) does not negate the felt experience of oneself and one’s group as natural, even primordial.

In sum, postcolonial theory emphasizes the material effects of power and identity as colonizing and colonized groups maneuver over contested political terrain. Neither Yup'ik/Native nor *kuss'aq* (non-Native, especially white or anglo) cultures can be understood as bounded, static entities existing in isolation from each other or from political interests. Social work as a profession and as a discipline so far has not understood this state of affairs adequately, to the detriment of service delivery.

Methods: Design & fieldwork preparation

The selection of ethnography

It seemed an obvious choice to begin to investigate village social services more systematically by using ethnography, the quintessential method of anthropology and the one most identified with “culture,” and to complement it with selected other qualitative research methods. Much of the existing literature about the region and people has been written by anthropologists. More important, it seemed arrogant to assume that as a white woman from the suburbs, even one who had spent time in the area, I would know what questions to ask, as would be necessary in survey research. Surely the place to start was with an in-depth case study about how social services worked in a single community. Applied ethnography, “the study of the cultural processes that occur in efforts to respond to particular human problems” (Chambers, 2000, p. 856), seemed especially useful. Ethnography also acknowledges in a way postcolonial theory does not that individuals and their lives are at the center of the theorizing.

However, ethnography itself has been problematized in the last thirty years. Classical anthropology “required authors to distance themselves from the relationships within which their experience of human difference was formed....[T]hey did this by essentializing selected traits of observer and observed, producing dehistoricized representations of either subject, or object, or both, that obscure, obliterate, or transform the relationship negotiated in practice” (Pels & Salemink, 2000, p. 4). The aim used to be, broadly speaking, to depict in realist terms (3rd person voice) the totality of a bounded cultural system. Overall agendas varied: some anthropologists wanted to learn more about their own cultures by means of comparison; some wanted to learn about the west’s own history by studying, as they thought, people still engaged in evolutionary stages westerners had passed through; some wanted to salvage the knowledge of threatened cultural systems before they disappeared entirely (Stocking, 1992). Regardless, the underlying assumption was that history and broader political relationships were external to a given culture and need not be considered in its description.

Ortner (1994) traces the growth of interest within anthropology in including history and politics in ethnographic analysis, an interest that stemmed in part from a recognition that cultures were not only changing as they confronted the modern/western world but were also resisting and in fact not disappearing. Shortly after the original 1984 publication of her theoretical summary, the postmodern critique was pointed directly at ethnography (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). As a contributor to orientalist depictions, critics suggested,

conventional ethnography “provid[ed] the knowing observer with a standpoint from which to see without being seen, to read without interruption” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 12). But such a standpoint did not, could not, exist. Ethnography was no longer perceived as transparent, not to mention innocent, description but rather as text, rhetoric, even fiction: contingent, partial accounts rendered within a web of power relations. Thus anthropology has had to grapple with making more explicit *whose* accounts and cultural knowledge get presented, and how those accounts are produced (e.g., Brettell, 1993; James, Hockey, & Dawson, 1997; Tedlock, 2000; Tedlock & Mannheim, 1995).

Of course there has been some backlash. Some scholars want to re-establish a link between ethnography and the world outside the ethnographer’s own imagination (e.g., Hammersley, 1992); others echo the postcolonial point made about strategic essentialism, that those studied may have a stake in “essentializing” (e.g., Quigley, 1997; Smith, 1999). But no one can avoid taking the critique seriously. At the very least, anthropologists have become more modest in their knowledge claims.

Part of anthropology’s response to the critique (and that of ethnographers from other disciplinary backgrounds) has been to experiment with new forms of writing and representation. Reflexivity has become a staple ingredient in ethnography: where was the ethnographer in the events related? What was the ethnographer’s social position relative to other actors in the narrative, and what was the ethnographer’s part in the action? Van Maanen (1988) offers a three-pronged

typology of “tales”: realist, confessional, and impressionist. Realist tales are the most like traditional ethnographies, accounts that are most concerned with presenting an insider’s insights into the phenomena in question, in which the ethnographer is least explicitly present. In contrast, “[t]he distinguishing characteristics of confessional tales are their highly personalized styles and their self-absorbed mandates” (p. 73); at their most extreme, confessional ethnographies read as being more about the ethnographer than anyone else. Impressionist tales are most likely to focus on the fieldwork itself, presenting rich, compelling accounts of events, but providing the least coherent interpretation of a broader scheme.

In this dissertation, I draw on all three styles of writing. Critiques of representation notwithstanding, it is after all a Yup’ik perspective on social work and helping that I am trying to elucidate, thus this is a realist tale, though aspiring only to the more modest “subtle realism” Hammersley describes (1992). Yet, already I write in the 1st person voice, and there will be times when I focus directly on my own experience and thinking in a more confessional mode. Finally, in the fifth chapter I use an extended composite case study as an impressionist tale to ground and animate the subsequent analysis.

A social worker preparing for ethnographic fieldwork

Few scholars from either anthropology or social work/social welfare have commented on the relationship between the two fields of practice and inquiry. One of the earliest to do so (Teicher, 1951) pointed out that the relationship was less one of collaboration than of donor-recipient, with social work borrowing from

anthropology, and this remains the case.³ Certainly social work has much to learn from anthropology, methodologically and theoretically. Sociologists are as likely to write about ethnography as a method, but anthropology's focus on culture as a lens is valuable to social work. Given its commitment to cultural competence, social work needs more sophisticated understandings of culture and clients' cultural affiliations in research as well as practice. Anthropology can help social work think through some of this conceptual swampland even as it also provides a model of how to rethink its role in the western colonial project.

The interdisciplinary relationship need not be one-sided. A valuable and complicated feature social workers bring to ethnography is the "practice wisdom" they have gained by working in the field – be that the professional field, working with previous "clients" who are similar to current "informants," or the literal field, working in the place where fieldwork will occur. I conducted fieldwork on social services provision in a Yup'ik community I had previously served as a school social worker. I already knew many of the individuals who would become informants, both socially and as a service provider or colleague: I was already acquainted with and had intervened with the issues they faced. When I discuss the fieldwork in detail in chapter three, I will discuss the implications of my accumulated tacit knowledge for my fieldwork experience, including the ethical dilemmas presented by my previous relationships with research participants.

³ Presenters at a recent panel on social work and anthropology addressed what each discipline had to share with the other, but still the discussion was weighted toward what anthropology had to teach

Despite the dilemmas, I anticipated that my practice wisdom and social relationships would be important to the study. Among other things, I wished to observe the interactions between the local, Yup'ik service providers and their clients – an intrusive form of data collection given the potential content of those exchanges. Thus, the previous relationships I had with people in the community would, I expected, be vital for access. These were people with whose problems I was already somewhat familiar, so they would not be exposing themselves to a total stranger; and, as importantly, I had already demonstrated that I would maintain their confidentiality. In addition, I planned to interview the service providers and their clients about those interactions, as well as to interview and observe the same service providers regarding other aspects of their work and their other community roles. My tacit knowledge about services in the community, and other forms of professional knowledge, would be crucial to my ability to understand the service context and to form questions based on my participant-observation.

What I here call “practice wisdom” and frame positively could be viewed as compromising my detachment and receptivity to emic understanding. Instead, I suggest, my prior knowledge supplemented my theoretical orientation in shaping my “foreshadowed problems.” In addition, I argue that my previous history with the community in fact served the same purpose, and affected the research only as much, as the early stages of lengthy traditional anthropological fieldwork. Numerous ethnographers comment that they spent some period of time at their site

simply getting to know people, establishing rapport, becoming familiar with the local context, and forming tentative ideas about what to pursue. I was not taking systematic notes about these activities while I worked in the community, but the outcome was the same.

Sample

I first planned a multiple case-study design, with shorter stays (about one month) in more villages. I intended to return to all four of the villages where I had worked, and where I was known. Though the selection of sites was made for practical rather than theoretical reasons, the four divided nicely into pairs of villages that differed by predominant religious tradition and missionary history, proximity to the regional hub town, and river- or sea-based subsistence. In addition, each pair included one fairly small and one fairly large village. I would not be able to generalize my findings in the strict sense, but I expected to learn about variation among villages.

It quickly became clear that I would require a longer period at each site, and I left for the fieldwork expecting to spend about two months each in only two villages, the larger of each pair. Within two weeks of my arrival at the first village, however, I realized that I would gain more insight into that community if I remained there the entire period. I chose depth over breadth. (I spent a week at the second village at the end of the fieldwork period, conducting more structured interviews, to gain a limited sense of how idiosyncratic my main informants might have been.)

Thus, I conducted five months – a semester – of fieldwork in one village. I learned early that the local service providers have few formal clients, such that my original plan to observe interactions between local service providers and their clients was not going to work. I shifted the focus to include other community members and learn more about informal helping as well, though I still concentrated most on situations involving the local, paid service providers.

Before I left the university and again as I modified the project, the University of Washington IRB and a tribal Human Studies committee approved the study recruitment and consent documents and procedures. Blank copies of the various consent forms/scripts used are included in Appendix B (versions for some anticipated categories of informants proved unnecessary).

Were I designing the study now, I would plan to be in the field for a year and spend a semester in each of the two large villages.

Questions of research validity and transferability

The kinds of threats to validity and reliability that quantitative researchers must address are not pertinent to ethnography and other qualitative research, and so here I discuss other strategies by which readers might evaluate this project.

Especially for an applied study, which may be used by policy-makers and others who require information and interpretation to inform concrete decisions, some criteria are necessary.

I wish to avoid a protracted discussion of ontology and epistemology. Suffice to say, I find Hammersley's (1992) neo-realism in tandem with the

“naturalistic paradigm” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) most useful, albeit unfashionable. We can acknowledge the limits of our understanding of “reality,” even claim there to be infinite, constantly shifting realities which we will never truly, finally, know. Yet, people live their lives within something they think of as (consensual) reality, and there are ways to tap into that more or less well.

“Validity” in qualitative research is ultimately about trustworthiness⁴ and persuasion: is the account compelling? Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe a variety of activities intended to enhance validity. Among them are prolonged engagement, extensive observation, triangulation, negative case analysis, and keeping a detailed analysis record of ideas and steps taken. All of these activities must be described in detail for readers to have confidence in the study findings. Sanjek (1990), too, favors being explicit in writing. In his terms, “theoretical candor” should characterize both fieldnotes and the finished ethnography; this requires acknowledging theory read and theory developed. The “ethnographer’s path” refers to the documentation of the particular “universe of informants” who constitute the cast of characters; and he advocates “an accounting of the relationship between fieldnotes and the ethnography based upon them” (p. 401). In sum, the more the researcher can demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the phenomenon under study

⁴ The emphasis on the researcher’s own trustworthiness points to why conventional reliability is not an issue. In ethnography, “‘reliability’ verges on affectation. We cannot expect and do not hope that another investigator will repeat the fieldwork and confirm the results” (Sanjek, 1990, p. 394). The researcher him/herself is so intrinsic to the process that replicability is impossible.

and help the reader trace the intellectual path from the minutiae of the field to conclusions, the more persuasive the account.

In addition, member checking adds to credibility. Do research participants recognize the findings? This is not about whether informants could have reached the research conclusions themselves. The contribution of the researcher is to “collect people’s accounts with the intention of making a different kind of sense, mobilizing concepts and vocabularies they do not have access to” (Murdock, 1997, p. 187) and thus to offer insights they had not already had. Nonetheless, validity is in part “tested against the everyday experience of the community of people” (Holy quoted in Sanjek, 1990, p. 400). If the conclusions do not resonate at all, convincing others that they are valid will be a much harder task.

During the fieldwork and since returning to the university, I have tried to attend to all of these strategies.

A comment about external reliability. Ethnography is generalized through “theoretical inference” (Hammersley, 1992); the goal is to identify the patterns and processes of social relations that are available only through up-close examination. The goal is not to say that because something was found to be true – or that we can be 95% confident it is true – of this small group of people, we can believe it to be true of this larger group of people as well. The unit of analysis in ethnography is not the individual person but some larger entity, in this case, the community. What can be learned from an in-depth study about the *processes* of social services in this village that might apply elsewhere and would be useful for other villages to know

about? Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to this as “transferability” and point out that the onus is on the person seeking to re-apply the findings to decide if the new context is similar enough to make the transfer legitimate.

Collaboration and participation

Another part of anthropology’s response to the postmodern critique has been to become more self-consciously collaborative and participatory. The messiness of fieldwork, the intricacies of living and working with people, should not be cleaned up in a way that implies the ethnographer’s sole authorship and authority; nor, for that matter, should the messiness of research design and analysis. Many anthropologists have drawn on Bakhtin’s idea of polyphony, adding more voices to the text. “The collaborative ideal entails the notions that knowledge creation in fieldwork always involves negotiating a boundary between cultures and that the result is never reducible to a form of knowledge that can be packaged in the monologic voice of the ethnographer alone” (Marcus, 1998, p. 113). Having others speak directly into the ethnography not only emphasizes their contribution to the main narrative but may add dissenting perspectives to the discussion – which are not necessarily more right than the ethnographer’s perspective but which must be taken seriously (Rosaldo, 1993).

This project is not “participatory” insofar as I did not ask the community members what they wanted to be studied and how to go about studying it. Likewise, I did not design and conduct the study with a Yup’ik collaborator/co-author. Rather, I chose the topic and made the decisions to adjust as I deemed

necessary. However, before I began the work – indeed, before I began my doctoral studies – I did consult with local people about whether they thought my questions interesting and important, whether the issues I identified resonated with their experience: yes. In addition, a Yup'ik social worker and friend served as an informal consultant through the years (and I am hopeful we can work together more directly and consistently in the future).

I gained permission to conduct the research from the four village Traditional Councils, as well as from the agencies that employ or supervise the local service providers, one of which has a formal Human Studies committee and IRB process. No one expressed reservations about the project once I explained it, but I suspect that some individuals, jaded from experience with other non-Native researchers, would not have made the time to listen to my proposal had they not known me or known of me. Already, my previous relationships were very helpful for gaining initial access to decision-makers to request local permission to conduct the study. Furthermore, I am aware that although people listened closely to my reasons for wanting to conduct the study and how they and their communities might benefit (Norton & Manson, 1996), I was also being evaluated on a more personal level: “Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything?” (Smith, 1999, p. 10). I confess that the study and I were not approved because of my facility with generators.

I am still humbled by the commitment of the local service providers to the project. Although all told me at times during the fieldwork that my presence would be inconvenient just then, in general, they were very flexible and open. (I was relieved the first time each told me not to come around, as it indicated that they did feel able to do so, rather than trapped in an undesirable situation.) When I began to consider remaining in the first village for the whole semester and asked if they would mind, each said immediately I should stay as long as I needed. Before long, they were seeking me out and making suggestions.

I returned to the village a year later to conduct limited follow-up interviews and check on some preliminary interpretations. The Traditional Council gave permission for the visit with no apparent hesitation, and again the service providers, and others, seemed eager to participate.

I returned to the area once more to present the findings and, I hoped, discuss the implications for services with community members. I was not able to reach the village as the weather that week was not conducive to small plane flight (I am committed to trying again in the next few months), and the tribal Human Studies committee had a very full meeting agenda with little time available for discussion. Their response to my presentation seemed positive, however, and the committee chair reported later that committee members from the villages told personal stories that indicated the findings resonated with their experiences. The committee will write a response to the full dissertation, and it will be included permanently in the dissertation as Appendix C. Also, I will respond to concerns in the dissertation as

time allows and will address them more fully as I prepare other publications. The committee also will review any other reports that I wish to disseminate. Mindful “that many Indians are not satisfied with the manner in which they have been researched or with how they and their ancestors have been depicted in scholarly writings” (Mihesuah, 1998, p. x), I am eager for their feedback and, I hope, endorsement. The village Traditional Council and the participating agencies will receive copies of the dissertation as well. Furthermore, to the extent that communities and agencies wish to use this work to inform their service delivery systems or have ideas for building on it, I am eager to pursue more collaborative relationships in the practice arena as well.

Chapter Two: Constructions of “The Yup’ik” (pt. I)

Cautions about orientalist, essentializing representations of Native peoples notwithstanding, contemporary scholars continue to engage with and write about the Yup’ik and other Alaska Natives.⁵ More importantly, Yup’ik people themselves still identify as a group and see some group characteristics and beliefs as consistent and continuous with their past, which they talk about as both affectively and politically important.

In this chapter and the next, I review the literature regarding what we think we “know” about this group of Alaska Natives and how current ideology and practices hearken back to the (imagined) past. The review is shaped with an eye to the analyses presented in subsequent chapters: what background information will assist the reader in understanding and evaluating the rest of this dissertation? Because engagement with social services, whether as a client or as a service provider, touches on so many aspects of people’s lives, I address a variety of social/cultural/political domains. In this chapter, I focus on the domains whose relevance to contemporary social services might seem the least intuitive: a geographical and statistical sketch of the state and the Yup’ik-dominant Yukon-

⁵ A note about terminology. Alaska Natives is the term that refers collectively to the three groups of indigenous Alaskans: Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts. Indian is the accepted umbrella term for Athabascans, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian; Eskimo, despite its negative connotations elsewhere, is the accepted umbrella term for the Yup’ik and the Inupiat/Inuit. An additional note about standard

Kuskokwim Delta, traditional/pre-contact life, governance & sovereignty, and subsistence. These sections provide vital background knowledge for the next chapter's review of literature on language use, local Christianity, human development and family relationships, and social problems and services.

In both chapters, I draw upon the work of many people, but the work of four anthropologists is heavily represented. Ann Fienup-Riordan has worked extensively with several Yup'ik villages and agencies around a variety of domains related to traditional and contemporary life. Of the people cited here, she probably works the most consistently with Yup'ik Elders. Phyllis Morrow is particularly interested in language and discourse across a variety of substantive areas. Both have longstanding relationships with Yup'ik research partners. Chase Hensel, Morrow's husband, works mostly with the non-economic aspects of subsistence; they lived for quite a few years in the Yup'ik region. Finally, Mary Pete is herself Yup'ik and has worked for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

Geography and statistics

The place

Despite its enormity, Alaska has few roads, making much of its land mass inaccessible by conventional ground transportation. With only four communities with populations over 10,000, even areas on the road system qualify as rural in terms of population density. Twenty-one percent of the state population lives in

usages: although I use the apostrophe in "Yup'ik" and capitalize "Native," not everyone does, and I do not change their spellings in quoted passages.

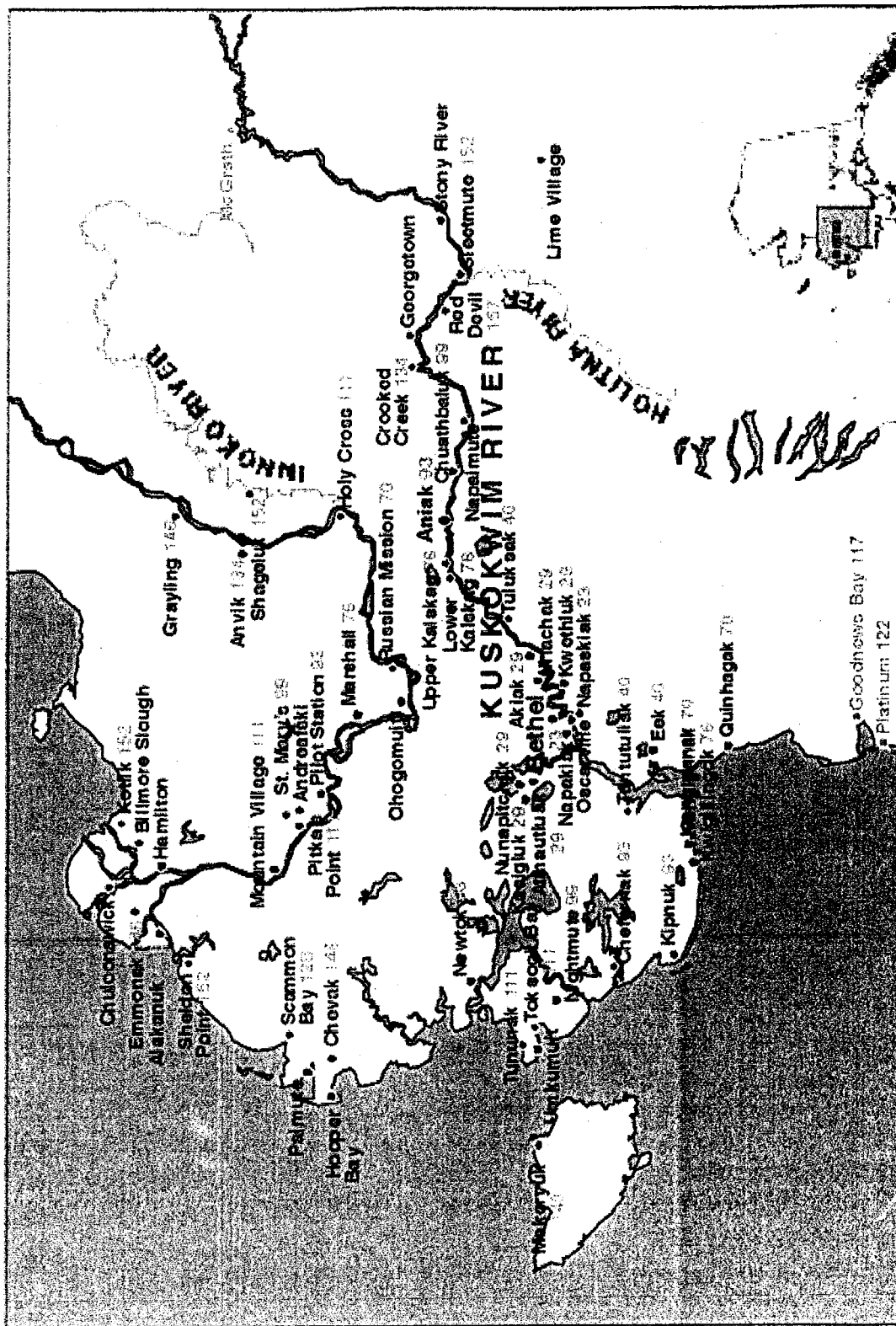


Figure 1 Map of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

rural areas; 48% of those residents are Native (Thornton, 1998). In this dissertation, however, I use the term “rural” to mean also “off the road system,” for these are the communities where most Native people live and where issues of geographic isolation (whether cast as positive or negative) are most acute.

The Yup'ik traditional homeland is the delta of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers (YK Delta)⁶ in the southwestern corner of the mainland (see Figure 1). The seasons are marked as much by the amount of daylight as by temperature; below the Arctic Circle, the area gets five hours of sun even at winter solstice. Temperatures typically range between -3 and +62 degrees F though they can be more extreme, and the wind chill makes the winter air feel significantly colder. The topography is mostly flat, treeless wetland, with shrubs along the sloughs and thicker vegetation inland. There are some hills along the Yukon River and south towards Dillingham.

Rural regional centers (“hubs”) have larger populations – several thousand people – than the villages surrounding them, which typically have fewer than 1,000 residents, often just a few hundred (typically half of them younger than fifteen years old; Hensel, 1996). The regional centers, where jet airplanes can land, are where most services are located, such as professional health care and social services, shopping, banking and insurance offices, and a small selection of restaurants and hotels.

⁶ As anthropologists categorize groups and their traditional territories, the area south of the YK Delta, whose largest town is Dillingham on Bristol Bay, is also a traditional Yup'ik area, and some of the Yup'ik-specific research drawn on later in this review includes that area in its discussion. However, most of the literature focuses on the Delta and its communities or sub-regions, and certainly western

Bethel, located as far up the Kuskokwim River as ocean-draft vessels can go, is the hub town for some fifty small Yup'ik villages. Besides the usual array of services and offices, Bethel is home to numerous churches, a 2-year campus of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, a library, a courthouse and jail, a small museum cum cultural center, a home-grown acting troupe, and a bowling alley. The public radio station broadcasts in Yup'ik as well as English, and the associated television station is one of the few to broadcast in the bush without cable. The Kuskokwim 500, a qualifying race for the Iditarod, begins and ends in Bethel, and the Camai Dance Festival attracts performers and audience members from around the state and the country.

Statistical portrait of the people

Alaska Natives currently comprise about 16% of the state population (2000 census per Leask et al., 2001),⁷ the largest proportion of Natives in any state. (Devastated by epidemics introduced by outsiders in the 1800s, the Native population reached pre-contact levels again in the early 1970s and has since doubled; cf. Fortune, 1989.) Natives constitute an even larger proportion of school-aged children, about 22%. Yup'iks number over 20,000 and are the most populous group of Alaska Natives, about 20% (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, ch. 1).

In 1990, 51% of Native women and 60% of Native men were considered part of the official work force statewide. Between 1990-1999, job growth increased

institutions (see below) have situated the Delta as a distinct region. Practically speaking, in this dissertation, Yup'ik territory and the YK Delta are the same.

by at least 25% in Yup'ik-dominant census areas⁸ but the prospects of more job growth in rural Alaska were grim. Per capita income in the YK Delta region is well below the state average; in the census area that excludes Bethel, and thus most of the professional-level jobs, per capita income is even lower. The October, 2001, unemployment rate in that same census area was 16.1% while the state unemployment rate was 5.6% (Commission on Tolerance Final Report, 2001). The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) has recommended that rural unemployment statistics include all adults not working (for pay) since so many people say they are not looking for work simply because they know there are no jobs (AFN, 1999). The official statistics obscure the fact that in Native villages, most jobs are part-time and/or seasonal.

Sketch of traditional life

In even attempting to summarize the themes important to an understanding of (traditional) Yup'ik culture, I am behaving in a decidedly kuss'aq manner – as are the scholars whose work I draw upon. Yet, given that Yup'iks individually and as a group regularly interact with kuss'aq people and systems, including social services, and that most kuss'aqs will never develop even as little experiential knowledge of the Yup'ik as we have, some mechanism for passing on knowledge, however tentative, seems necessary.

⁷ Unless stated otherwise, the statistics in this section are taken from Leask et al. (2001).

⁸ The Bethel and Wade Hampton Census Areas cover approximately the same territory as the YK Delta.

That said, it is awkward to describe who “the Yup’ik” were prior to contact with outsiders. Most of what we know about traditional Yup’iks comes from historical records created by outsiders in combination with the oral knowledge of contemporary Yup’ik Elders. Both sources of information must be approached carefully if trying to reconstruct the linear past. Not only were the written sources one-sidedly produced by Russians, Americans, and Europeans rather than by Yup’iks, but the outside explorers, traders, and missionaries had specific agendas and audiences. At the same time, the living memory of today’s Elders goes back only to about the 1920s – well after the introduction of Christianity, the epidemics that killed many of that generations’ Elders, and the permanent residence of outsiders in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Those memories cannot be accepted as simple history either.

But reconstructing a simple history is not the goal; rather the goal is to present – but not reify – aspects of the past that remain relevant. Several oral history projects facilitated by Fienup-Riordan (e.g., 1990, ch. 9) have been important to the Elder orators “insofar as they articulated the desire of Yup’ik people to be understood as possessing a unique past, *an essential part of which* they are actively trying to carry with them into the future” (1990, p. 228, my emphasis). Bringing the point home, Elders have been willing to share detailed stories and memories of traditional ceremonies because the moral principles that underlay them were important for contemporary young people to know and to enact, albeit in new

ways (Morrow, 1984).⁹ I am not aware of efforts to resuscitate the ceremonies themselves.

It is almost a cliché to say of Native people that their societies are “integrated” such that western distinctions among aspects of social life are not meaningful – the unity of religion/spirituality and other activities being the usual example. But despite the hackneyed term, a key point here is that, indeed, to the best of our knowledge, integration is (was) at the heart of Yup’ik social life.

Pre-contact Yup’ik¹⁰ lived in configurations of family groups, which varied with the season. Semi-nomadic, they moved among seasonal campsites within a given range of territory. At the summer fishcamp, the unit of people who lived together might be as small as what we now think of as a nuclear family; more prominent in the literature (and, in my experience, popular memory), was the group of two or three extended families who shared a winter settlement and who, together, were self-sufficient.¹¹ Whereas during the spring, summer, and fall, people necessarily concentrated on procuring and processing food, the short winter days – and more limited resources available for harvesting – lent themselves to a more overtly social and spiritual focus.

⁹ See also Carpenter (1982; cf. Dybbroe, 1996) on the use of principle: “what is old does not always die, and ideas that once had the power to be considered indisputable truths can rise again, even in an alien setting” (p. 81).

¹⁰ Unless stated otherwise, the rest of this section is drawn collectively from Fienup-Riordan (1986a; 1988; 1990; 1994), Kawagley (1995), and Morrow (1984).

¹¹ These groups were a primary reference point for self-identification; self-designation as “Yup’ik” is a fairly new phenomenon (Iutzi-Mitchell, 1994).

Qasgiqs

Socially and spatially, winter villages centered around the *qasgiqs*, the communal men's houses. Adult males and older boys spent most of their time in the sod *qasgiq*, which had a fire pit in the center, a hole in the roof to allow smoke to escape, and benches lining the walls. Women, girls, and small boys stayed in smaller, intergenerational matrilineal sod houses. Young women took prepared food to the men of their family but otherwise went into the *qasgiqs* only during specific ceremonies; husbands periodically visited their wives in the women's space. In general, the sexes lived interdependent but largely separate lives. In an exception to this rule, shamans of either gender lived with their spouses in nuclear family settings.

Some scholars suggest that men's and women's overall status was approximately equal (Ackerman, 1990; Shinkwin & Pete, 1983), largely because their subsistence roles were complementary – indeed, women were in control of the harvested meat once the men brought it back to the camp. Nonetheless, it is the *qasgiqs*, and therefore the men's lives and social organization, that have garnered the most attention. Pertinent for several of the social domains to be discussed at more length later, each man's sleeping and sitting location within the *qasgiq* was a function of his age, with the oldest men closest to the entrance as the position of most prestige and influence. The men took frequent sweatbaths together and spent much of their time preparing for the next of the winter ceremonials or for the upcoming subsistence season. All activities were occasion to teach younger boys

necessary skills. Instruction was rarely didactic but consisted of demonstration by the adult and trial attempts by the child. Most activities were accompanied by the Elders telling traditional stories or explaining the intricate prescriptions and proscriptions that outlined the right way to live, *yuuyuraq*. (The same pattern of teaching skills and passing on of *yuuyuraq* as a moral framework applied among the women and girls.)

Ceremonies were held in the *qasgiqs*. The annual cycle consisted of at least ten distinct ceremonies. Some were celebrated only among members of the winter village group; others, however, were occasion to interact with members of larger village “confederations,” regional collectives of village groups engaged in regular “exchanges of food, women, names, feasts and visiting” (Fienup-Riordan, 1984, p. 64; cf. Shinkwin & Pete, 1984). All ceremonies created intensified opportunities to display key values and principles, which can be captured by – but not reduced to – the phrase “cyclical reciprocity and relationship.” Crucially, the ceremonials were not mere parties held to pass the time but comprised an organic phase of the subsistence year and *yuuyaraq*.

Relationship and reciprocity

“[S]ociety began in an original unity, and individual action was important only insofar as it jeopardized or promoted that unity” (Fienup-Riordan, 1986, p. 262). Acting in accordance with the twin principles of relationship and reciprocity was required to maintain the essential unity.

Every one and every thing had its “person,” its awareness, its self. Human persons participated in regulated exchanges with each other as well as with the persons of the human dead and the persons of the wild animals, which were seen as sentient and of equal worth with humans.¹² Human persons cycled through life and death, as symbolized by the cycling of names. When someone died, her/his name likely was one (among several) given to the next children to be born within the confederation. Those children permanently took on the social relationships – and perhaps some traits – of the deceased; through this process, in combination with their own family relationships, children were tightly bound into the community. During annual village feasts honoring the dead, families of the deceased gifted their namesakes, until a confederation feast, held less frequently, signaled that the spirits of the deceased had been adequately propitiated. (Although sources vary on whether the cycling of human persons originally referred to reincarnation, now, when most Yup’iks are Christian, I think naming is meant to evoke the memory of the deceased but not to imply that the individual, hopefully safe in heaven, has returned.)

Likewise, animal persons (*yua*) did not die unless killed in the hunt while “sleeping”; otherwise, their persons retreated to the bladder to await return to the wild. If treated well, the animals would choose to come again to the same hunter and family. Animals did *choose* whether to offer themselves, and the correct

¹² As the only animals domesticated by the Yup’ik (Kawagley, 1995), dogs seem not to have been considered important participants in the cycles of exchange.

response to such an offering was to kill, butcher, and distribute the animal according to certain rules; the women's actions and attitudes in processing and sharing the meat was as important as the men's in procuring it. The subsistence year climaxed during the Bladder Festival. Amidst several days' feasting and gifting, the bladders containing the persons of (in particular) seals caught in the previous year were returned to the water with requests to the seals to return. "Its most important premise was that one's future livelihood depended on one's past behavior. Care and respect shown to the bladders helped a hunter maintain a correct relationship with the supernatural. Occurring at the winter solstice, the festival pervasively expressed the idea of renewal and regeneration" (Morrow, 1984, p. 127).

Generosity was a crucial part of the ceremonies as well, demonstrating respect for the animals through the ritual distribution of meat, and for other humans as resources were shared. The best hunters – "a man indeed" as one early missionary translated the Yup'ik word (Fienup-Riordan, 1988) – were most responsible for providing, so that over the course of the year, material wealth was distributed relatively equally.

A key aspect to individual (human) development, then, was the process of becoming aware of, "waking up" to, both the natural and supernatural worlds and how to behave within them. Thoughts could affect events in the material world. Thus, proper awareness promoted one's proper and respectful thinking of others: for example, one's unborn child, others in the group, the animals one hoped to harvest; wrongful or careless thoughts could have negative effects on the baby's health,

interpersonal relationships, the animals' willingness to be caught. Verbalized thoughts were even more powerful. Interactional norms therefore stressed indirectness, agreement and conciliation.

Shamans, the individuals in closest touch with the supernatural realm, had varying specific roles in the distinct ceremonies but were always involved. As intermediaries between the everyday and the spirit worlds, they saw into and sometimes traveled to the lands of the dead and the animals' homes. With the help of the spirits, they could discern what caused sickness and famine, and could prescribe (sometimes engage in) the actions necessary to set things right (cf. Turner, 1989). Now, one Elder has described shamans as "the professors of our people" (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, p. 89). Though shamans were not community leaders vested with the same level of overall authority as the Elders (see below), Elders might sometimes request help from shamans and their spirit helpers.

In contrast to the scholars who emphasize the importance of integration in traditional Yup'ik life, Oswalt (1963a) has interpreted Yup'ik cosmology and shamanism quite differently. He has claimed that the traditional Kuskokwim Eskimos "distinguished between ceremonies and shamanism" (p. 88) and had a "mechanical" (p. 153), "inadequately integrated religious system" (p. 155). It is worth noting both that Oswalt's work generally has a more disparaging flavor than other scholars', and that he is infrequently cited in recent work.

Generally, then, relationship and reciprocity, and related to them, personhood and *yuuyaraq*, are among the underlying, interlocking principles of

traditional Yup'ik life that people agree have remained more or less continuous, at least as ideals.

With few exceptions (e.g., the academically trained Kawagley, 1995), it is outsiders who explicitly articulate the principles embedded in Yup'ik stories, practices, and rules for living. Direct experience is the locally preferred mode of learning and the preferred basis for making claims; abstracting and transferring “situated knowledge” (Floersch, 1998; Haraway, 1988) from one setting to another is the individual's responsibility. Morrow (1990) points out, for example, that among the Elders who are so often the informants for studies about the Yup'ik, details are provided about their own experiences or the activities of others which they observed, but only generalities are given about people at large, and speculations about motivations are not vocalized. Likewise, she suggests, in traditional ceremonies involving masks, shamans directed men in what to make because they, the shamans, had had specific visions of the spirits the masks would represent; representations were based on one person's experience rather than a shared notion of the generic image. “In Euroamerican societies, we act as though we can discern definite meanings, and tend to assume that they are accessible to analysis....In the Yupik case, meaning is treated as essentially indeterminate; analysis and verbalization are potentially dangerous and misguided,” she concludes (Morrow, 1990, p. 145; see also Stern, 1999, on tacit knowledge and the Inuit).

The same tolerance – preference – for indeterminacy of meaning allows the Yup'ik to make frequent use of metaphor as not only a narrative device but, Fienup-

Riordan (2000, ch. 3-4) argues, a distinctively Yup'ik way of conceptualizing and talking about the world. She identifies analogical thinking as an indicator of a cultural tendency to focus on similarity. She calls the process of merging traditional and western beliefs and practices “metaphorical incorporation – bringing unlike things together, recognizing their ‘sameness,’ and using this relationship as grounds for incorporation of one into the other” (p. 111). Arguably, an orientation towards “hybridity” is already “Yup'ik.” Fienup-Riordan grounds her discussion in contemporary Yup'ik Christianity, and I will revisit the idea in the context of that example in the next chapter. For now, I want to point out a process of seeing and thinking that will appear in other contexts as well.

This section lays the groundwork for the domain-specific discussions that follow. As highlighted by the Elders' willingness to share their knowledge about the ceremonial cycle, and by the general practice of metaphorical incorporation, what is important about a reconstruction of traditional life is what it means for present and future.

Sovereignty & governance

In the YK Delta specifically, and in rural Alaska generally, the discourse of sovereignty, self-determination, and governance most often is framed in terms of subsistence hunting and fishing. I will address subsistence as an economic and cultural practice in the next section, for subsistence shapes how people think about so much else, including social welfare. Here, I address key points in the sovereignty debates apart from subsistence. This is necessary partly as background for the next

section, but also, as I will demonstrate at the end of the section, because sovereignty shapes how social welfare-specific policies are implemented.

I begin with a description of pre-contact Yup'ik governance. I then review the policies that shape Native control, with a focus on federal law and recent Alaska Native and Yup'ik responses to it. I conclude with a discussion of the Indian Child Welfare Act as an example of sovereignty's effects on social welfare policy.

Qasgiq authority

Traditional Yup'ik "government" had no institutional structure that was recognizable to westerners, no individuals in whom authority was formally vested. Yet, even as the early missionaries and explorers commented on the absence of government, they noted mechanisms of control – earned influence and esteem, and public opinion (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 9). Elders, literally seated in the qasgiq in the positions of greatest authority, drew on their accumulated life experience to guide behavior, to advise (on issues such as when to hold ceremonies and move to spring camps), and when necessary, to settle disputes. Elders talked to offenders, reminding them of the rules for right living. The goal was "to re-integrate both [offended and offending] parties in the conflict into the normal functioning of the community" (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p. 213). In addition to the Elders, the best hunters acted as unofficial leaders; their opinions carried more weight than other younger men's because of their wealth and related distributional largesse. Led gently by the Elders and hunters, the group in the qasgiq managed by consensus and persuasion. (See Fienup-Riordan, 1984; 1988; Lantis, 1960.)

When individuals did not conform to local expectations, regulated teasing was the choice means of pointing out their transgressions. During the Messenger Feast in particular, “joking cousins” publicly poked fun “as a safe channel for social criticism” (Morrow, 1984, p. 132). Gossip and sometimes ostracism were also used as means of indirect confrontation (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 9; 1994). In addition, the sheer number of men in the qasgiq opposed to an individual’s behavior could pose an implicit threat (Hughes, 1960). Despite a predilection “to carefully avoid direct confrontation and the expression of hostility in interpersonal relations....homicide, the publicly condoned execution of dangerous individuals, and warfare appear to have been regular aspects of eighteenth-century intra- and intergroup relations” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p. 146). As indicated by the story about the first war, which began with an accident for which family members sought violent, sanctioned retribution and which escalated as more and more deaths had to be avenged, wars among the confederations began with specific individual acts (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 7; Oswalt, 1990; Tennant & Bitar, 1981, pp. 15-17).

The earliest outsiders to make consistent contact with the Yup’ik were Russian traders during the 18th century, primarily along the Kuskokwim River and in the Dillingham region south of the YK Delta. The traders “did not seek to disturb the tempo of local life” (Oswalt, 1990, p. 55), nor did the Russian government interfere with local rule. They did introduce changes (see especially Black, 1984; Oswalt, 1990); for example, they taught a few selected men to read to facilitate

trade.¹³ Furthermore, as Yup'iks came to the trading posts, they encountered new kinds of physical structures (i.e. log cabins), practices, and items such as flour, tea, sugar, and kettles (whose Yup'ik names are actually Russian loan words). Despite increasing awareness of peoples beyond the YK Delta and the adoption of some household items, however, it seems that Yup'iks limited their new found knowledge of Russian ways to interactions with Russians; the traders seemingly did not have significant impact on the qasgiq and Yup'ik internal social organization. (The impact of Russian Orthodox missionaries was greater than the traders' but still not as dramatic as the impact of other missionaries; see the next chapter.)

The Russian government did assert ownership over the land, and control over the people who lived there, when it sold the Alaska territory to the United States in 1867. Since then, Alaska Natives have confronted a much more interventionist U.S. government.

A selective history of U.S. federal Indian policy

“The congress shall have Power...to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, *and with the Indian Tribes*” (quoted in Indian tribes as sovereign governments: A sourcebook on federal-tribal history, law, and policy, 1988, emphasis added by Sourcebook). So were Native peoples recognized in the U.S. Constitution as political entities. Their de facto and de jure powers have been contested ever since.

¹³ For further discussion of the implications of literacy, see Mather (1995).

A special “trust relationship” exists between Native American tribes¹⁴ and the federal government.¹⁵ Within this relationship, most famously articulated by the Marshall Supreme Court in 1831, the tribes were characterized as “domestic, dependent nations” within the U.S. and were provided a status distinct from the states. As “wards” of U.S. guardianship, however, the tribes have been subject to Congress’s plenary power, such that Congress is able to abrogate their rights. Accepted principles of Indian law direct Congress and the courts to acknowledge tribes’ “reserved” rights to land and self-government and to interpret laws and documents in favor of expanding tribes’ rights. However, these principles cannot guarantee that federal policymakers will fulfill their “trust responsibilities” as the tribes would have them do (cf. Hannum, 1999).

When the U.S. purchased Alaska, Natives were more or less ignored, other than in a statement that the territory’s “uncivilized” tribes were subject to U.S. laws. For many years, the “dependent” status of Alaska Natives in comparison to other Native Americans was uncertain, although the federal government provided services to Alaska Natives that, it became clear over time, were predicated on their class as Natives.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA) and its 1936 counterpart, the Alaska Reorganization Act (ARA) decreased the confusion. The IRA/ARA made

¹⁴ The word “tribe” has a mixed history in anthropology theory (Fried, 1968; Hymes, 1968; McGaskill, 1997). Here, I use it in a quasi-legal sense as the unit of Native American group which is recognized by the federal government and which governs its members. Each Alaska Native village is an independent, federally-recognized tribe.

¹⁵ For this section, I draw on Case (2002) and Indian tribes... (1988) unless otherwise specified.

Alaska Natives' tribal/village governments equal to other Natives', at least in principle, such that since then special provisions favoring Natives have been legally grounded in U.S. government-tribal government relationships rather than race. The ARA included provisions for creating reservations which would have clarified the land over which the tribal governments had jurisdiction. (Aboriginal title to vast tracts of historically used land was generally assumed but unspecified.) However, lawsuits and then a turn in federal policy towards termination rather than creation of trust relationships prevented the designation of more than a half-dozen reservations, and it has remained a practical limitation to Alaskan tribal governments' authority that their territory is so ill-defined.

Primarily, the IRA "sought to promote self-government by encouraging tribes to adopt constitutions" (Indian tribes..., 1988). Tribes had the right to accept or reject the IRA, but even tribes that rejected it formalized their political institutions. (Later, the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 assured tribal members Bill of Rights-style protections in their dealings with tribal governments.) Many Alaska Native villages did form IRA governments. As the qasgiqs disappeared in the early 20th century, largely at the behest of (American) Christian missionaries, consensus and extensive talk remained the process of choice for social control; the councils formed by the IRA created a new but reasonably compatible mechanism for the same (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 9) – although voting and formal roles on the councils were foreign procedures.

When at statehood Alaska Native villages were encouraged to incorporate under state law, many included IRA provisions in their city charters, such that both IRA (a.k.a. “Traditional”) and municipal Councils currently exist in many rural communities. I have seen no general statements about how Native villages divide responsibilities between the two.

The other piece of federal legislation that particularly impinges on the authority of Alaska Native governments is Public Law 83-280 (1953), which was part of a broader effort to terminate federal dependency links with tribes, even to terminate some Lower 48 tribes’ status *as* tribes. At its heart, PL-280 rescinded federal jurisdiction over a variety of criminal and civil matters and turned it over to the states. PL-280 applied to five specific states; Alaska automatically became a sixth at statehood in 1958. Notably, other states were given the option of PL-280 jurisdiction over Native people, and where the states made their acceptance of jurisdiction contingent on tribal approval, there was a distinct pattern of tribes rejecting state authority.

At issue has been the extent to which state jurisdiction overrides tribal jurisdiction. Tribal jurisdiction over relevant matters was not extinguished by PL-280 but had already been subject to federal authority, which was now transferred. The Act restricted state jurisdiction in three ways, including a statement that any tribal customs or ordinances “not inconsistent with any applicable civil law of the State” should be followed (quoted from the legislation in Case & Voluck, 2002, p.

395). As Case & Voluck (2002) point out, “inconsistent” and “applicable” are key terms in the interpretation of the law.

Don Shircel, an administrator for a tribal organization in Fairbanks, has explained (personal communication, 6/1/99) that in Alaska, PL-280 has been applied mostly to domestic issues, including child welfare. By 1999, no court had decided whether PL-280 extinguished all tribal jurisdiction over matters where there was conflict between state and tribal policy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Shircel advocated for the position that accepting state participation and help in these matters did not negate a tribe’s right to do for itself as well.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)

Since ARA intentions to create reservations in Alaska had failed, there was no legally-recognized relationship between Natives and land, and thus no definite space over which land tribal governments ruled. Further, it was not always clear who else was empowered to make decisions about land use. Mitchell (2001) recounts a story that, he suggests, jump-started Alaska Native desire to have land claims formally designated. In the late 1950s, when scientists wanted to experiment with hydrogen bombs in the “uninhabited” land on the northwest Alaskan coast, the Inupiat village just a few miles from ground zero persuaded the Department of the Interior that the Bureau of Land Management was not authorized to give the Atomic Energy Commission the land because it was already theirs under aboriginal title.

(This sentence provides a small taste of just how many parties were stakeholders –

the actual list would be much longer.) Native efforts to address this threat led to the creation of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). In the late 1960s, the AFN, together with the state of Alaska and representatives of the oil industry, both eager to develop the newly discovered oil fields on the north slope, urged Congress to begin the negotiations of which the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (PL 92-203; ANCSA) was the product.

ANCSA authorized the formal distribution of lands in Alaska and created private Native corporations and administrative regions: twelve regional corporations (and a thirteenth for Natives living out of state) and many smaller, village-level corporations. Each was provided a certain amount of money and given title to certain lands; together, the corporations were granted almost \$1 billion and 44 million acres in fee simple absolute, while all aboriginal title to land was extinguished. The Native corporations are like other privately chartered, for-profit corporations and are in no way considered to be dependents or wards of the federal government. Every Native person alive when ANCSA became law automatically became a shareholder.

Skinner (1997) characterizes the political climate surrounding ANCSA's development as pro-self-determination (cf. Martin, 1975); others (see especially Berger, 1985) suspect that ANCSA was intended to promote faster assimilation. Whatever Congress's intentions, federal supervision and management of Native lands are more limited in Alaska than elsewhere. Congress did respond to the most

immediate threats to the corporations and their lands with amendments to ANCSA in 1988. Whereas originally, individuals could have sold their shares to non-Natives after 1991, now corporations have the option to buy back those shares. Also, land was to have been taxed after 1991; now it remains untaxed so long as it also remains undeveloped. In addition, corporations have the option to grant stock to the “afterborns,” those born after 1971, who were omitted from the original legislation.

ANCSA is much more complicated than requires explanation here. What is important for current purposes is how rather than clarifying tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction, ANCSA further obscured it. Sovereignty should not have been affected by ANCSA; at least, there is nothing in the legislation to indicate that reducing tribal governments’ authority was anticipated or desired, and the AFN played a significant role in shaping the law. But Native lands are constructed as corporate assets, not Indian Country territory governed by tribes; tribal governments still have no land base to define their jurisdiction.

Furthermore, privately held lands are subject to state laws, rather than tribal laws, regarding their use (i.e., hunting and fishing). ANCSA could have provided opportunities for economic self-determination on a western model. But to the extent that Native cultures are based in subsistence, economic growth on a corporate model was not necessarily what people wanted anyway. Although the young, newly-educated Native elites who largely comprised the AFN were ready to accept a new model of Native empowerment based on kuss’aq political and economic

engagement (Mitchell, 2001; Napoleon, 1975a), others were not. Canadian Justice Thomas Berger (1985) spent two years listening to the testimony of Native people around the state who feared ANCSA would diminish their ways of life; he recommended that the corporations' lands should be "retribalized" – given to the Native governments in perpetuity. Western models of economic development would not necessarily be prohibited on tribal lands, he pointed out, but subsistence activities could be privileged.

A few comments about ANCSA implementation for the Yup'ik. Calista (literally, "the worker") is the regional corporation that, in general, corresponds to the YK Delta. Calista has struggled more than most corporations to become profitable; it still lags far behind its counterparts in assets and dividends (Leask et al., 2001). I have never heard Calista referred to as a leader in the cultural-preservation realm. To the contrary, it is criticized as promoting western concepts of land ownership rather than Yup'ik – Yup'ik concepts of "ownership" being relational, "where a man has a right to, in fact an obligation to, use a site because of his relationship to previous generations of people who had a definite relationship to the species taken at the same place" (Fienup-Riordan quoted in Case & Voluck, 2001). However, by declining to develop its lands, Calista has perhaps helped to keep subsistence activities viable – and, just as importantly, has helped to demonstrate the strength of Yup'ik interest in subsistence as a way of life. As federal and state agencies attempt to work actively with local Natives around land

issues (Turek & co-presenters, 2003), I think a visible commitment to culture over cash will help allay arguments (such as Mitchell's, 2001) that Yup'ik people are less "genuinely" invested in subsistence than they say.

The Yupiit Nation

Hughes (1960) found that on St. Lawrence Island, a Siberian Yup'ik community moved from qasgiq local control to a more formal council government in the mid-1920s because there were too many disagreements under the traditional, unstructured system. Here, then, the IRA didn't change local government so much as formalize it and facilitate federal recognition of the village as a tribal entity. Publishing in 1960, Hughes characterized the Council as a "benevolent autocracy" with de facto jurisdiction over a variety of domestic and economic matters. (The council's official jurisdiction at the time was unclear. Hughes did not mention PL-280. Given how recently the law had been passed, and the extreme isolation of the island – closer to Russia than the U.S. – PL-280 likely was not at issue when he conducted his research.)

I have seen nothing to suggest that the Central Yup'ik had moved to formal councils prior to the IRA; however, the Yup'ik seem to have accepted IRA or comparable Councils as their political bodies. When shortly after the passage of ANCSA, Napoleon (1975b) criticized village governments as ineffective, he questioned how they were run but did not question their legitimacy. And it has been IRA governments that sovereignty advocates and activists have fallen back on when resisting ANCSA and the state.

When residents of Akiachak, a Yup'ik village on the Kuskokwim, initiated the Yupiit Nation sovereignty movement in 1983, they began by dissolving their own City Council, sending its charter back to the state, and assigning city assets to the IRA government, the Akiachak Native Community (Berger, 1985; Kasayulie, 1992). Two neighboring villages followed suit, and together the three formed their own school district to recover control of their children's education.

The goal of the Yupiit Nation movement, explained its president ten years ago, was "to work towards unifying the 56 villages in the Calista region into a regional government" collectively known as the Confederated Tribes of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta (Kasayulie, 1992, p. 44). By 2000, nineteen villages along the Kuskokwim and the Bering Sea coast had joined the movement, though not the school district (Fienup-Riordan, 2000). Sub-regional differences in contact history and language were among the factors that led other villages to decline to join (Fienup-Riordan, 1992).

Echoing the traditional style of governance, where leaders guided the people without designating an individual as *the* leader, the Yupiit Nation movement has collaborated with other regional organizations (Fienup-Riordan, 1992). The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)¹⁶ are the most prominent of the Yupiit Nation's

¹⁶ AVCP provides social welfare services, and YKHC provides physical and behavioral health care services. Each has a catchment area approximating the Calista region and the YK Delta. I will discuss both at more length in the final section of this literature review when I focus on social services.

partners;¹⁷ the Yupiit Nation's first president was even elected chair of AVCP's executive board (Oswalt, 1990). Despite differences and disagreements among the organizations, they share the overall goal of local control over land and subsistence, in particular, but also over various kinds of service provision as well as law enforcement and courts.

Into the future

“ANCSA's purposes and effective tribal governments are complementary and not inconsistent” says the AFN (1999). The body that advocated for ANCSA originally and which is still the largest Native political group, the AFN seems not to have given up on ANCSA to the degree Yupiit Nation advocates have done. Work remains to bridge the corporate model and “tribal” model of land stewardship and self-determination. Meanwhile, even without clearly demarcated territories, tribal governments must decide how to proceed.

Fienup-Riordan (1990, ch 9) conducted a study with contemporary Elders about traditional (qasgiq-era) leadership, in which the Elders identified several qualities of good leaders that, while not necessarily congruent with the earliest written records, at least indicate the qualities Elders now hold to be important.

Among them are: the knowledge and wisdom to teach (model for) people, “peaceful

¹⁷ The Calista corporation and village corporations notably are not mentioned as partners in the sovereignty movement. Indeed, as part of an anti-corporate protest, AVCP temporarily withdrew from the AFN when the latter first proved reluctant to support the “1991” ANCSA amendments (it later did support them) (Fienup-Riordan, 1992). Not all efforts to increase self-determination after ANCSA have been anti-corporate, however. Several Yup'ik village corporations merged in the late 1970s to give their larger body of shareholders more control over their consolidated lands (Oswalt,

attitude and exemplary behavior,” generosity, and most importantly, the ability to speak out. The emphasis on speaking out is fairly recent, but in an era when leaders must advocate for the community with outsiders, some level of assertiveness and savoir-faire is crucial. As with the generation of Natives who advocated for and helped negotiate ANCSA, younger people are more likely than Elders to display these qualities in a way westerners recognize. Fienup-Riordan cautions against assuming that the authority of “softer-spoken Elders” has been displaced, however. Indeed, although younger people may make for more articulate (English-language) spokespersons, I suspect their legitimacy internal to the village is not solid because of their age.¹⁸

In the same study, Elders indicated they wanted young people to hear the old rules more than they currently did. Notably, “the emphasis was on talking about the rules, not forcing people to obey them” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p. 208). I will comment on this orientation later in the dissertation.

To conclude this section, I examine one national policy – its origins at the federal level and some of the challenges of implementation – to illustrate the link between sovereignty and social work. The discussion will also provide the specific policy backdrop for some activities in the village that I will examine later.

1990). Likewise, the North Slope Borough has assumed significant control over political affairs among the Inupiat within the public (state-endorsed) governance structure (Chance, 1990).

¹⁸ In a different context, a middle-aged woman who teaches at the college in Bethel expressed discomfort with seeming to take on authority more appropriately held by Elders. “When called upon

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Tribes in Alaska are slowly gaining control over the protection of their children. In 1978, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act (PL 95-608; ICWA) as part of the larger federal effort to promote Native American self-determination (George, 1997), specifically in response to the greatly inflated national rates at which Native children were removed from their homes and placed with or adopted by non-Native families. Indeed, the standard of evidence of endangerment was raised considerably to reduce the frequency with which state agencies took custody of Native children. Other provisions of the law pertinent to public child welfare services include: a mandate to ascertain a child's possible tribal status and notification of parents, guardian, or tribe when a child was Native American; a ranked list of types of families with whom to place Native children for foster care or adoption; and a requirement to transfer the custody proceedings of Native children to tribal courts when requested by parent, guardian, or tribe (Fischler, 1980; Kessel & Robbins, 1984; MacEachron, Gustavsson, Cross, & Lewis, 1996).

The attention paid in ICWA to state mandates points to a fundamental contradiction within the law – an assumption that states will continue to provide child welfare services to Native children on the one hand, and explicit statements about Native jurisdiction over Native child welfare on the other. ICWA calls for the

to give workshops to audiences of Yup'ik elders, [she] is in an awkward position since she is both

exclusive jurisdiction of tribal governments “over any child custody proceeding involving an Indian child who resides or is domiciled within the reservation of such tribe” (25 USC 1911(a)). Note that the language of this section links jurisdiction with reservation status. Such language makes a provision which appears quite straightforward much more problematic, especially in Alaska, given the uncertain status of Alaskan tribal governments’ authority and Alaska’s being a PL-280 state.

As part of juggling federally-authorized Native control and PL-280, “concurrent jurisdiction” is the child welfare policy framework in Alaska. Implementation is a work in progress. In the realm of child protection and placement, concurrent jurisdiction effectively means two things. First, tribes are free to handle situations as they see fit so long as state workers with the Division of Family & Youth Services (DFYS) are confident that the children in question are safe; the state simply does not get involved in these cases. Indeed a manager in social services at the Athabascan (Interior) analog to AVCP takes a very pragmatic stance: “sovereignty is what you make of it” (Don Shircel, personal communication 5/3/99) – and by extension, so is jurisdiction. He points out that tribes handle informally many situations, some of which DFYS never knows about, and the more responsibility tribes take for their own children at this level, the more power and control they will in fact have. The street-level policy here is Native jurisdiction; the “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980) *are* Native people.

The second meaning of concurrent jurisdiction, however, is that once the

female and younger” (Iutzi-Mitchell, 1994, p. 142).

state is actively involved in a case, the state has jurisdiction. Officially, DFYS works within evolving procedural guidelines around tribal notification and following the preferences outlined in ICWA for caretaking families, and tribes have the right to contest state decisions regarding their children. However, the AVCP ICWA Social Worker commented as recently as late 2002 that she was only starting to hear state social workers use the term “concurrent jurisdiction” (Joan Dewey, personal communication, 11/12/02).

This second meaning of concurrent jurisdiction also gives the state the option – but not the obligation – of recognizing tribal actions. Alaska is the only state to officially recognize voluntary, customary adoptions (Morrow & Pete, 1996). Now a child’s Traditional Council oversees the agreement between the parties regarding who will raise and take formal responsibility for the child, a form and small fee are sent to the Bureau of Vital Statistics, and the adoption is legally complete. This is the result of an administrative decision made by a former Commissioner for the Department of Health and Social Services. The fact that the state made such a decision is heartening, but that another administrative decision could revoke the first highlights the state’s authority.

Concurrent jurisdiction will come up again in the context of subsistence and game management.

Subsistence

This section consists of a trifurcated discussion of subsistence.

Contemporary discourse moves along three intersecting pathways: subsistence as an economic practice, shaping and shaped by other kinds of work; subsistence as a cultural practice, informed by and perpetuating a sense of identity and continuity with the Yup'ik past; and subsistence as the key marker of and instrument for sovereignty. The three strands, although separated analytically, comprise a single braid; for they reinforce one another.

The Yup'ik begin in a fortunate position insofar as the subsistence resources they traditionally relied on are still available. The privileging of subsistence uses (over commercial uses) for fish, sea and land mammals, and water fowl is threatened,¹⁹ but in contrast to, for example, the Plains tribes whose contemporary relationship with the buffalo can only be a symbolic one, the animals of the YK Delta are still out there.

Economics and work

Subsistence cannot be reduced to economics, but there remains an economic dimension. Researchers have estimated the cash value of subsistence harvests, primarily meat and fish. For example, in 2000, hunters harvested 373 pounds per person in the Southwest/Aleutian region, which would have cost \$1,492 per person to purchase (Leask et al., 2001). Hunting and fishing contribute significantly to

¹⁹ Berries and “mouse food” also remain a part of rural Yup'iks' diet, but I have seen and heard nothing to suggest that access or rights to gathered foods is contested.

Alaska Natives' diets, and without subsistence foods, many families would have to buy more food at the store. Given the costs of transporting goods to remote villages, additional store-bought food could increase families' weekly expenditures significantly. Nonetheless, subsistence food is not free. One researcher characterizes as "conventional wisdom" the dilemma that "[i]ndividuals without wage labour jobs can rarely afford the high costs of equipment and supplies, but the constraints of regular employment prevent them from pursuing activities when the weather makes such activities most productive" (Stern, 2000, p. 9). Yet, very few (if any) rural Native families eat only store-bought food.

Subsistence clearly is important to people for other, non-economic reasons. I will discuss those reasons below; first, I want to address another economic aspect of subsistence in the villages, the "mixed economy" (Wolfe, 1984). The phrase captures the importance of both subsistence activities and wage work, and in contrast to the phrase "transitional economy," does not imply that subsistence is waning (Kruse, 1991). To the contrary; the challenge is making both aspects of the mixed economy work. Depending where they live and what game they seek, especially now that village sites are fixed, hunters require time to reach the appropriate area, and then need to spend some time engaged in the hunt itself; this could take days – days which cannot always be predicted accurately ahead of time. Standard Monday-Friday, 9-5 jobs are not easily compatible. (However, in the villages, there are limited opportunities for full employment anyway.) Combining

commercial fishing and trapping with subsistence activities seems to have been easier (Wolfe, 1984) but provides a less reliable income from one year to the next.

Some employers have attempted to accommodate hunting to some degree. In the far northern (Inupiat/Inuit) region of Alaska, for example, North Slope Borough jobs have had flexible “subsistence leave” provisions built into them, and the Borough more or less shuts down during a whale hunt (Chance, 1990; Kleinfeld, Kruse, & Travis, 1983). Along similar lines, in Nunavut, the new Inuit-dominant Canadian territory, a number of small pilot projects suggest that “the ability to blend tradition and innovation” in small-scale industry is a factor in successful northern economic development (Myers, 2000).

I have heard of subsistence leave policies in the YK Delta. Notably, I have not heard of women taking advantage of them. It is still very rare for women to hunt, and the processing (and caretaking) tasks they do engage in are “spatially restricted, repetitive, and multi-focused” (Hensel, 1996, p. 120) and can be integrated into a wage-work schedule. Thus, even when women work for pay, they end up working a double shift rather than taking time off to focus on subsistence (cf. Bodenhorn, 1990). Notably, women’s engagement in subsistence processing is unassociated with their paid employment status but, as makes intuitive sense, is associated with the subsistence participation of other adults in their households (Kruse, 1991) – i.e., men must bring home the raw materials.

Many extended families have negotiated the mixed economy by combining resources across households, such that family members who have wage incomes and

members who can be more active in subsistence cooperatively supply households with equipment and meat/fish (Magdanz & Utermohle, 1998; Wolfe, 1984).

Magdanz & Utermohle (1998) point out that within these distribution networks, it is the households with the larger number of middle-generation members who contribute the most subsistence products, while households with relatively more older people who are less physically able, and households with more younger people who have not yet perfected their skills, contribute less. The assumption is that younger people will grow into their roles within the network (cf. Hensel, 1996). Stern (2000) questions this assumption. While not denying that subsistence remains socially and emotionally important for Inuit young people, she suggests that as the concept “work” has become increasingly associated with clock-oriented wage labor, the opposing category “leisure” has become meaningful – and that as a type of non-income-generating activity, subsistence falls into the leisure category. Thus, she argues, subsistence competes for young people’s time and attention “not only with wage employment, but also with other, less capital intensive, more convenient, and increasingly more popular recreational activities” (p. 10). The danger is that as young people do not use and perfect their subsistence skills, they become less able to enact their adult roles properly.

Although the amount of time some people can and/or want to spend to engaged in subsistence is diminishing, it is unlikely that its affective importance will disappear.

Identity and continuity with the past

In a study designed to move beyond economic analyses of subsistence, Hensel (1996) investigated the contemporary link between subsistence and identity. Even Yup'ik individuals who spent relatively less time engaged in subsistence activities *talked* about it, as a marker of affiliation. Often it was their wage-work and managing the mixed economy at the household and even individual levels (cf. Kruse, 1991) that constrained – but did not preclude – their participation.²⁰ Hensel, whose research participants included kuss'aqs, concludes that locally negotiated ethnicity is not a dichotomous category (Native/non-Native) but rather a bicultural continuum.²¹ The key question is not, Is s/he Yup'ik, but How Yup'ik is s/he? (cf. O'Neill, 1996, ch. 2), with evaluations based on relative conformity in practice and attitude with “the ideology of subsistence” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 2).²² The Inuit young people who engaged in hunting as recreation might have been rated as relatively “less” Inuit in the specific context of hunting, but still did identify as hunters and did still give and receive food (Stern, 2000).

²⁰ Hensel conducted his study in Bethel, where there are many more kuss'aqs than in the villages, and where Yup'iks are more likely than in the villages to hold full-time jobs, potentially complicating their participation in subsistence. Nonetheless, the findings regarding how Yup'iks think about themselves and subsistence probably can be transferred to the villages.

²¹ Although Hensel did not use these terms, his description of kuss'aqs' participation in subsistence reminded me of Goldie's (1995) comments about “indigenization” in Australia: the white settlers incorporate Native-identified practices into their lives in order to make themselves more at home.

²² For current purposes, the ideology of subsistence functions as a contemporary, English expression for yuuyaraq: relationship, reciprocity, and respect among persons remain the core principles – in contrast to kuss'aq assumptions of human domination. “Stewardship, not to mention ownership, of resources is taken with a grain of salt, as the real power is not in the people, but in the continuing relationship between humans and the natural world on which they depend” (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p. 48).

Lest it seem that subsistence discourse serves as a replacement for subsistence practice, Hensel (2001) also has argued the importance of subsistence talk for the people who do directly and regularly engage in the activities. “The very doing of subsistence can and does serve as an identity marker....[But] these activities mostly happen offstage and out of view....[T]alk about subsistence is a proxy of these unseen and offstage activities” (p. 224). Subsistence discourse also demonstrates one’s knowledge (e.g., of the seasonal calendar and geography), skills (e.g. for survival), and the meanings one attaches to the practices.

Hunting in the narrow sense – the offstage activity away from the village – is not the only subsistence activity of symbolic importance.²³ As mentioned in the Traditional Sketch, women’s activities were an integral part of the total hunting process, and women’s contribution to subsistence is still seen as such²⁴ and serves as a marker of ethnic identity. Like men, women talk about subsistence (Hensel, 1996), and at least in some villages, women are the main participants in local feasts, such as the Seal Party in some coastal villages, that enact the sharing and relational themes of the traditional ceremonies (Fienup-Riordan, 1983). (These feasts also function as a practical mechanism for family and community resource distribution, with meat, Pampers, and myriad items gifted from hosts to guests.)

²³ Hensel attributes to non-Natives that hunting is usually defined narrowly. “Processing is much less valorized by Euro-American culture than is hunting, so there is less support for these practices from mainstream culture” he suggests (2001, p. 224).

²⁴ One contemporary Inupiat man said bluntly, “I’m not the great hunter, my wife is” (Bodenhorn, 1990); though his wife did not kill, she attracted or repelled the animals.

Not surprisingly, there are plenty of examples of clashes between the ideology of subsistence and kuss'aq regulatory systems. Even when both Yup'iks and kuss'aqs have the best of intentions, still they may act to cross-purposes. I provide two examples because the dynamic they illustrate will be relevant again in the social services context. One case (Morrow & Hensel, 1992) had to do with two boys arrested for shooting a muskox out of season. Muskoxen were unusual in this particular area of the YK Delta, and the boys consulted with Elders about how to handle this anomaly. By traditional logic, it had wandered here and offered itself, and the boys killed it and distributed the meat in the proper way. Muskoxen were not on the official list of local "customary and traditional" game, however, and the court determined that the regular hunting calendar applied. The boys were found guilty and fined. Fienup-Riordan summarized the catch-22: "If they see musk oxen and kill them, they are breaking the white man's law; if they see musk oxen and let them live, they are breaking Yup'ik law" (1990, p. 181). Lawmakers tried to respect Native cultures by creating a category of customary game to which standard rules did not apply, but the codification reified practice over principle, and problems remained.

The other example has to do with state and federal practices of monitoring fish and animals to protect species populations. Kuss'aqs understand observation stations located in wetlands to be a tool for conservation and the protection of endangered geese; older Yup'iks argue that the scientists' inappropriate presence in the nesting grounds harms the relationships with the geese and so the geese do not

present themselves. (Likewise regarding sonar for counting salmon.) The problem – decreasing numbers of fish and animals – is causally understood so differently that one group’s efforts to address it are constructed *as* a cause by the other (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 8).

It is important to note that the attitudes and beliefs of some Yup’ik and Alaska Native individuals and communities are changing. On Nunivak Island, where muskoxen are familiar, they commonly are seen as a means to earn money, and Native hunters will work as guides for non-Natives. Also, some Natives accept the Fish & Game model and do believe that some species are experiencing actual population decline; they agree that there is a problem beyond the animals’ choice, and that research (i.e., counting) is necessary (Brower & Hepa, 1998; Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 8).

Such changes cannot be simplistically understood as a step on a path towards acceptance of a *kuss’aq* worldview, however. Amidst many changes, subsistence writ large remains *the* emblem of Yup’ik and Native identity. “Our subsistence lifestyle is our culture. Without subsistence we will not survive as a people. If our culture, our subsistence lifestyle should disappear, we will be no more,” one Yup’ik man says flatly (Active, 1998, p. 36) – one who, incidentally, may participate directly in hunting and fishing relatively less than many, as he works more than full-time as a reporter, writer, and story-teller. His comment is indicative that control over subsistence, and therefore land, remains a central struggle.

Subsistence, sovereignty, and strategic essentialism applied

Currently, Alaska is a patchwork of Native corporation, state, and especially federal lands, with multiple federal agencies administering different parcels of land under different regulations. (Excluding the Native corporations' holdings, only 0.27% of the land is available for private ownership; Wolf, 2003.) It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to review the myriad legislation and case law that structure current policy over lands and subsistence (but see Case & Voluck, 2002, esp. ch. 8). Very briefly, the federal Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (PL-96-487, 1980; ANILCA), borne in the legislative history of ANCSA but excluded from ANCSA itself, reinforced the importance of subsistence uses over other “consumptive uses” (i.e., sport and commerce) of “wild, renewable resources” and introduced a “rural preference” in times of limited resource availability, which was intended to privilege Native users by employing “a kind of community entitlement” rather than race/ethnicity as the mechanism (Case, 1998; Thornton, 1998).²⁵ Since then, ongoing lawsuits and legislation have attempted to reconcile ANILCA and the Alaska state constitution, the latter written in terms of individual rights or needs.

Because multiple households participate in networks of subsistence distribution, and because of the affective importance of involvement in those

²⁵ It is important that ANILCA addresses subsistence *uses* – a category of purpose that cannot encompass Native ideologies (Case, 1998). A related sidenote on terminology: as I was beginning my fieldwork in August, 2001, the governor was hosting a conference on subsistence. Yup'ik-language news reports usually include English words for which there is no Yup'ik equivalent and which have functionally been incorporated into Yup'ik. In Yup'ik reports about the conference, reporters used the English word “subsistence” rather than Yup'ik terms, I suspect to mark that the conference was addressing only one aspect of what the Yup'ik words would include.

networks (whether as provider or recipient), Native people have resisted proposals to make subsistence eligibility or preference a function of income and other individual or single-household measures (Magdanz & Utermohle, 1998). That such approaches have been proposed reinforces Thornton's (1998) point that "it is the conflicting cultural visions – a Native one based on cultural [group] identity, customs, and traditional values, and a non-Native one based on individual rights and economic need – that continue to polarize the subsistence debate" (p. 32).

To their credit, federal and state regulatory agencies are trying to incorporate Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) into their policies²⁶ and build capacity for collaboration in management and research (Turek & co-presenters, 2003). However, Hensel & Morrow (1998) caution that "decontextualizing pieces of local knowledge and reincorporating them as information in scientific reports seriously misrepresents indigenous perspectives" (p. 70). In other words, the holism of Yup'ik and other Alaska Native knowledges cannot easily or innocently be picked at, and "concurrent jurisdiction" of fish and game must mean more than the state borrowing selected pieces of data and insight. Despite the risk, the AFN has found efforts so far to be effective (enough) and supports extending co-management as the best available mechanism for "carrying out federal responsibilities *in consonance with Native cultures and knowledge*" (AFN, 1999, my emphasis).

²⁶ These agencies oversee other "consumptive uses" of fish and game besides subsistence, and the co-management of commercial fisheries, in particular, is important for Natives, as many rely on commercial fishing for cash income.

The bottom line is that despite cooperation, Native people do not have legal control of subsistence, and where they have practical control, it is at the discretion of state and federal officials. That some argue that Native subsistence priority is a federal trust responsibility (Thornton, 1998), despite ANCSA corporations not being trust entities, brings the issue squarely back to questions of sovereignty and who controls the lands.

The category “Native/Indian/indigenous/aboriginal” is inseparable from land (Beteille, 1998; Sullivan, 1995; Valaskakis, 1996). Peoples to whom the category applies must have had a long-standing relationship with a particular place, and the category is invoked in contrast to others who came later to that place, perhaps forcing the indigenous inhabitants off. The relationship with the land is affective/spiritual and practical as well as spatial. People not only (used to) live there, but they have done things there that cannot be done elsewhere, and together the practices and the place, and the thought/belief systems there enacted, contribute mightily to identity. To the extent that decision-makers outside the Native group accept (at least, are encouraged to accept) the integrity of the Native-land relationship, the category becomes a political one. The brief discussion in the first chapter about strategic essentialism here becomes very pertinent.

The Yup’ik clearly have “earned” the label Native beyond mere ascription or biology,²⁷ and the importance of subsistence to individuals and to the group is

²⁷ That such a status must be earned and recognized by others, further demonstrates its political aspect (Castile, 1996).

widely accepted. By extension, the importance of control over lands is vital, and whatever the failings of ANCSA, I do not think even it would have been passed by Congress in a policy era other than one of promoting self-determination. It is because policymakers imagined Native people as uniquely connected to their lands – an image which AFN representatives reinforced positively for both affective and instrumental reasons – that Congress and then-President Nixon ceded any control; and that political activism also shaped and strengthened the inclusive category Alaska Native (Oswalt, 1990). I wonder if the Yupiit Nation’s attempts to gain tribal control of Calista lands will ultimately be strengthened by this first step of recognizing lands as Native at all, and if Calista’s decisions not to develop the lands will lend further support to the Yup’ik-land-subsistence equivalency.²⁸

Regardless of how tribal governments and land ownership develops, however, the relationship to the land, and the animals on the land, creates a status for Natives that can be used instrumentally, strategically. Positioning themselves *as Native* has already won the Inupiat subsistence privileges on the world stage. “North Slope Inupiat have a long-standing aboriginal quota [for harvesting] the otherwise totally prohibited bowhead whale. The very qualification of this quota makes clear that this right is granted the Inupiat on account of their aboriginality” (Dybbroe, 1996, p. 47). And with the category Native thus marked as special, it opens up space to negotiate for power in other domains, as with control over child

²⁸ I do not know how the boundaries of the Calista lands were drawn; the corporation region maps directly onto neither the YK Delta nor the somewhat larger area inhabited by the Yup’ik. I credit

welfare. I think it is no accident that it is the U.S. minority group whose “orient” can at least partially be located in space that has jurisdictions outside states’ control. Partly, as reviewed earlier, jurisdiction grows out of tribes’ historic dependency relationship with the federal government. But I suspect that the legal arguments about the tribes’ status would have not been so persuasive had the non-Native imagination not been primed for constructions of Natives and their land, and had Native activists not highlighted this aspect of themselves/their cultures over others.

Some understanding of subsistence is crucial for social work in rural Alaska because in itself, it is so very important for the Yup’ik and other Alaska Natives, and because it is such an important site for thinking through sovereignty issues, which are connected to social work in other ways. In addition, social service providers in the villages must manage the mixed economy in their family groups, which affects the *doing* of their jobs, and they are among the people for whom subsistence shapes identity. More broadly, although the practices and even the ideological components of *yuuyaraq* are changing, the core principles for Yup’ik life remain, at least to some degree, and Yup’iks want some control over how they change in the future. The title of one anthropologist’s recent book captures the dilemma: *Hunting Tradition in a Changing World* (Fienup-Riordan, 2000). “Hunting” functions as both an adjective and a verb, acknowledging the importance

Legare (2001) for making me wonder; he argues that cultural as well as pragmatic factors were important to the designation of the borders of the Nunavut territory in Canada.

of the activity as well as the constructed element of contemporary Yup'ik identity.

Social work in the YK Delta must deal with both.

In the next chapter, I address four more domains of the literature review.

Chapter Three: Constructions of “The Yup’ik” (pt. II)

In this chapter I review the literature on four additional topics: language, Yup’ik Christianity, human development and family, and finally, social issues and services.

Language issues

My focus on language in this section is premised on the proposition that language is an integral aspect of culture. Linguistic anthropologists have built an entire discipline around this idea, “stressing a view of language as a set of practices, which play an essential role in mediating the ideational and material aspects of human existence and, hence, in bringing about particular ways of being-in-the-world” (Duranti, 1997, pp. 4-5). In other words, the language which a group of people speak shapes how they think about and act in the world, even as the language is shaped by their interests (in both senses of the term). Studying language provides insights into other aspects of the speech community’s culture while additional cultural knowledge provides sensitivity for the linguistic study. (See Duranti, 2001, and Brenneis & Macaulay, 1996, for empirical examples.) No aspect of culture is fixed, but language conventions are conservative (Morrow, 1990, drawing on Gumperz, 1982) – so that for a people experiencing rapid sociocultural change, their language is likely to reflect older/more traditional ways of being in the world, which affects their experience of and engagement with that world..

In this section, I map language use and debates as they apply to the Yup'ik of the YK Delta, and I sketch power issues related to language use.

Three languages

Most discussion of language in the Y-K Delta centers on the diminishing use of Yup'ik and the concomitant increasing use of English. That contemporary Yup'iks must know English is unquestioned by families, educators, or scholars. English is the language of the state, the cash economy, electronic communications, and higher education. Meanwhile, the Yup'ik language remains extant as what Krauss (1998) calls a Class A language – one that is spoken by all generations including children. In contrast, Class B languages are spoken by only the parental generation and older; Class C by the grandparental generation and older; and Class D by only the very old, typically by fewer than ten people each. However, Yup'ik's status as Class A is precarious. It “is counted A whereas in reality it is a continuum of A-C, where children in about 17 villages out of 68 speak Yup'ik and there are as many villages where the youngest speakers are now grandparents....[And even in those 17 Class A villages,] change is still in almost every case unidirectional for the worse” (Krauss, 1998, p. 14).

It is probably no coincidence that many of the 17 villages where children speak Yup'ik are members of the Yupiit Nation. Rather like control over land and the maintenance of subsistence, the maintenance – even revitalization – of the

Yup'ik language is an important issue of local concern.²⁹ Will certain ideas or orientations be lost if they can no longer be (easily) thought? Woodbury (1998) illustrates such fears by demonstrating that although stories can be translated, the “affective work” of certain Cup'ik (a dialect of Yup'ik) suffixes cannot be fully and elegantly retained in English; the same stories become qualitatively different. Recent anthologies of traditional stories have been published in both languages (Orr & Orr, 1995; Tennant & Bitar, 1981) (the Alaska Native Language Center developed a standard Yup'ik orthography in the 1970s).

More important for this dissertation, however, is the little-acknowledged third language, “village English,” which may partially mitigate the loss of culture and identity caused by the decreasing use of Yup'ik. Drawing on features from both Yup'ik and English, YK Delta-area village English is the most widely used language of the region. Further, village English (with some regional differences) is the lingua franca of Alaska Natives statewide.³⁰

The hybrid village English qualifies as a creole, a “true” language whose vocabulary is largely derived from the high-status language and whose syntactic structures may come from the dominant language, the local language, or be

²⁹ Most people look to bilingual education to prevent language death in Native communities. I do not explore bilingual education here; however, I note that even in the Navajo community at Rough Rock, home to the flagship bilingual/bicultural Native school, there is a shift towards English (McCarty, 1998).

³⁰ Although it would be most accurate to talk specifically about Yup'ik English, Tlingit English, Athabaskan English, etc., both white scholars and Native people are more likely to talk about village English/Indian English as one uniform entity. Descriptions of village/Indian Englishes appear similar despite their roots in quite different traditional languages. Some argue that the effects on Indian English of various tribal languages were spread through the boarding school system (Craig, 1991). For ease of expression, I follow others' example and refer to village English in the singular.

spontaneously generated (DeCamp, 1971). As Yup'ik and (standard) English have co-existed, then, they have become increasingly blended, and more systematically so.

There are increasing calls to document “any remaining aspects of Native culture and language” retained in North American creoles (Fleisher, 1982; Valentine, 1998). A complete ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974; Saville-Troike, 1989; Schiffrin, 1994) has not been conducted for Yup'ik village English speech communities, but the work that has been done indicates the importance of framing discussions of YK Delta language as about three languages. Phonological and grammatical features mark village English as different from standard English. And differences in words' meanings and pragmalinguistic strategies create intra-English communication challenges.

Yup'ik is a high context language. The “structure of the Yup'ik language itself makes it easy for a range of social and philosophical meanings to be implied or left open to the listener's interpretation. These features of Yup'ik also characterize the English dialects which have arisen in Yup'ik communities” (Morrow, 1993, p. 6; cf. Morrow, 1994; N.S.). Thus, words used in village English may have more elastic definitions than the same words used in standard English. Morrow (1993) provides examples of the practical stakes of this different word usage. In village English, the word *let* glosses a single Yup'ik word meaning potentially anything from *allowing* to *compelling*; in the context of a rape trial, for example, testimony that the defendant “let” an alleged victim into his car probably

meant she was forced into the car, though to a monolingual English speaker, the implication is that she may even have asked permission to get in. Likewise, a single Yup'ik word expresses intentional through unintentional error; in Yup'ik English, *joking* and *lying* are the synonymous glosses.

It is in the realm of discourse styles, about what language *does*, that the link between cultures and languages is most evident. Beyond the sounds made, the structures used, and the words used, language as a whole is used to enact values and norms and to negotiate reality and to present oneself embedded within them. Scollon & Scollon (1981) provide one of the more comprehensive and systematic descriptions of village English and its relation to its arctic speakers, in their case Athabaskan Indians. Significantly, the Scollons mention aspects of Athabaskan culture which echo key aspects of Yup'ik culture highlighted earlier; for example, indirection and non-interference, child learning through adult modeling but not explicit teaching, a reluctance to tempt fate through speaking about it, and a norm of reciprocity and mutual obligation in relationships (cf. Fienup-Riordan, 1986a). Likewise, strategies of language use are similar. Athabaskans and Yup'iks tend to talk less than non-Natives, especially with strangers; to avoid an appearance of boasting or pride; to allow extensive periods of silence before and during conversations and to take longer pauses than standard English speakers; and to avoid asking direct questions and answering them when asked. The Scollons' (1981) discussion of the management of power in social relationships among the Athabaskan fits with what Morrow (1993, 1994, N.S.) finds regarding Yup'ik

defendants in the courtroom: mainstream discourse patterns set up a hierarchical relationship which evokes a “compliance response” intended to re-establish reciprocity (cf. Ross, 1992).

Morrow and the Scollons summarize the social effects of the encounter between dominant-culture and Native discourse styles in standard and village Englishes. Morrow (1993; see Table 1) contrasts the values speakers see themselves enacting; Scollon & Scollon (1981; see Table 2) highlight how one group’s expectations influence the impressions of interlocutors. Both acknowledge that these are idealized descriptions and do not apply equally to all individuals.

Table 1 Comparative Speech Norms Affecting Legal Interactions
Morrow (1993, p. 5)

Yup’ik:

- Speakers who are conservative with their words are admired as thoughtful and careful
- Words can be self-actualizing; they influence the subject of discussion (negative discussion may make negative things happen and vice versa) and may reflect poor judgement on the speaker’s part
- Analysis can lead to confusion; specification tends to pin down meanings too exactly and is therefore limiting and potentially incorrect
- It is not prudent – or even possible – to speak knowledgeably about another’s motives
- Even if one disagrees with others’ statements and assessments, it is important to respect their views since truth is not the province of a single viewpoint; truth will prevail

Kuss’aq (white/Anglo):

- Speakers who elaborate their words are admired as elegant and precise
- Empty, presumptuous, or negative speech reflects poorly on the speaker but does not affect the subject of speech
- Analysis and specification of meaning are enlightening; measurement and precision are valued
- It is possible to offer an opinion about others’ motivations
- If one disagrees with another’s views or allows untruths to go unchallenged, untruths may prevail

The results of cross-cultural encounters are unsurprising given such opposing discourse styles. Standard English speakers are much more likely to control the topic, have/take more opportunities to express their opinions, and

determine the predominant style of the conversation. Both parties are likely to leave the exchange dissatisfied.

Table 2 Cross-Cultural Interpretations of Speakers
(Scollon & Scollon, 1981, p. 36)

Athabaskan impressions of whites/Anglos

They talk too much
 They always talk first
 They talk to strangers or people they don't know
 They think they can predict the future
 They brag about themselves
 They don't help people even when they can
 They always talk about what will happen later
 They ask too many questions
 They always interrupt
 They only talk about what they are interested in
 They don't give others a chance to talk
 They are always getting excited when they talk
 They aren't careful when they talk about people or things

White/Anglo impressions of Athabaskans

They do not speak
 They keep silent
 They avoid situations of talking
 They only want to talk to close acquaintances
 They play down their own abilities
 They act as if they expect things to be given to them
 They deny planning
 They avoid direct questions
 They never start a conversation
 They talk off the topic
 They never say anything about themselves
 They are slow to take a turn in talking
 They ask questions in unusual places
 They talk with a flat tone of voice
 They are too indirect, inexplicit
 They don't make sense
 They just leave without saying anything

Politics of village English

There clearly are translation issues between standard English and village English, and differences in discourse styles may promote stereotyping as well as

impede communication. Further complicating cross-cultural language issues in the YK Delta are the politics of creoles. At least since Labov (1972) demonstrated the regularity of African-American Vernacular, linguists have recognized the legitimacy of creoles (Hymes, 1971; Rickford & Traugott, 1985; Valdman, 1977), but among lay people, often creoles are not acknowledged as fully expressive languages and are dismissed as lesser forms of other languages. At worst, creole speakers who do not demonstrate full “fluency” in a recognized language may be characterized as “semilingual” (see Leap, 1982). Such judgements affect not only the way village English speech communities are thought about but how much power they exert.

Bourdieu (1991) provides a useful model for the critical analysis of speech acts. Using economic metaphors, he postulates a linguistic “market” in which languages (codes and discourse styles) have different values. Speakers whose linguistic “habitus” – their predispositions regarding whether/when/how to speak and what to say – is most aligned with the demands of the market will best be able to accomplish things with language, and to see their codes and discourse styles reinforced and reproduced.

The bottom line of the model is that discourse is no mere act of egalitarian communication, and knowledge of a particular code is but a starting place for building linguistic “capital.” The model has disturbing implications for village English as well as for the Yup’ik language and the Yup’ik people who speak either. Speaking Yup’ik or village English, Yup’iks are at a disadvantage in all but the most circumscribed settings.

My conjecture is that because village English has some value on the dominant linguistic market, it will not fall into disuse as Yup'ik is doing (and as so many other traditional languages have done). And because it can be a way of enacting identity, I anticipate that speakers will impute even more value to it in local markets.

An intriguing point here is that so far there do not seem to be significant intra-group distinctions between village English and standard. "English" is rarely qualified, and while unmarked English, I would have assumed, should mean standard, in fact it often refers to village English. Those who have the standard code available to them use it; the majority of Yup'iks have village English available and use it. (Everyone appears to have receptive competence for standard English.) In my experience, there is no code-switching between the two forms of English and no notice taken of which variety is used (except in the classroom). A bilingual Yup'ik social worker, and personal friend, confirmed my impression: "I personally speak standard English when I talk to my clients, who mostly speak English. I guess I tend to do a lot of mixing of Yup'ik and standard English, especially among my peers. I don't think people out here find a 'need' to improve how they speak English, it's so common, I guess, that no one really thinks about that much" (Wiz Michael, 11/18/99, personal communication). Knowing her work, I am fairly certain her clients speak village English, and I understand her "mixing" to mean codeswitching.

Village English does carry value on the linguistic market; it provides people access to the institutions and resources of the dominant culture. There are no U.S. systems that people might want to interact with that are categorically inaccessible to village English speakers. However, their linguistic capital and institutional access are still very limited relative to standard English speakers. For example, people likely can fill out a job application but are not likely to impress an interviewer, especially if the job is located in the city where village English is not widely used. Not only is there the risk of semantic misunderstandings, but as the Scollons (1981) point out, certain prosodic features are preferred by (are comprehensible to) standard English speakers for structuring talk. A Native job applicant whose traditional language is structured otherwise and who fails to use “proper” prosody in English will be perceived as incoherent and incompetent.

I speculate that as traditional languages fade and a pan-Native consciousness grows (a la the AFN), village English will become increasingly important as the mutually intelligible language that *Natives* use and no one else (Loon, 1993). Despite the marginalization of village English on the global market, its role in promoting political viability and solidarity gives it ongoing value to its speakers; and (somewhat tautologically) its having value preserves its linguistic market and so makes its survival as a language more hopeful, regardless how many people learn standard English as well. Diglossia may become the norm, with each variety of English a stable language in its “appropriate” domain (Fairclough, 1995; Lippi-Green, 1997). However, the intra-group difference between village and standard

Englishes may become more overtly politicized for Alaska Natives as village English becomes a more recognized marker of Native identity. Right now, I think (this is not something I have studied systematically), there is overlap in the YK Delta between the people who speak standard English and those who speak Yup'ik. Thus, standard-English-speaking Yup'iks cannot be criticized as “talking white” as are some standard-speaking African-Americans, for example (Lippi-Green, 1997); too many hold the trump card for linguistic identity. But as fewer people speak Yup'ik, and as with increasing education more people speak standard English, such accusations may come. And since standard-English-speaking people are more likely to have professional jobs and salaries, I suspect increased recognition of class differences will come as well.

English use in Yup'ik villages is no transparent means of communication. Regardless of how language use and language politics evolve, village English warrants more recognition among Yup'iks and kuss'aqs in the YK Delta, especially among social workers, where the stakes of misunderstanding are potentially very high, as in the courtroom. My later analysis does not aspire to full-fledged discourse analysis, but as language is the material of which textual data is built, familiarity with issues of translation and power among the three languages is important not only for context but for methodology.

Yup'ik Christianity

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, it provides additional context for my later analysis. In the traditional Yup'ik worldview, the secular and the

sacred were of a piece. Nowadays, this remains largely true. Most if not all modern communities have very active Christian churches. A discussion of regional missionary history adds depth to understanding contemporary village life and helping.

My second purpose, as I move closer to the specific domain of social services, is to argue that insight into the Yup'ik-missionary relationship and the Yup'ik-Christian experience are especially instructive for social work. Social workers tend to grimace and dissociate themselves from missionaries, but I think that there are some suggestive parallels. From their own perspective, the missionaries had the best of intentions: they went to do good; they thought they had a responsibility – to help. And to varying degrees, they thought that meant not just addressing one discrete domain of social life, religion/spirituality, but also getting Native people to act more like the mainstream middle-class. One anthropologist describes the “civilizing project” of missionaries and others “as asymmetrical dialogues” between a civilizing center, i.e. the Christian West, and peripheral or minority peoples. “[T]he mission enterprise sought to bring not only the Gospel, but the modern life of Christian nations – with all its advantages in health, technology, and science – to the peoples of” the mission territories (Harrell, 1995, p. 20) – which sounds rather like early social workers, even contemporary ones.

Before Christian missionaries arrived in the 1800s, Yup'ik contact with outsiders was limited to occasional explorers and traders who introduced some new items but do not seem to have changed everyday life in significant ways. Thus, the

missionaries confronted qasgiq practices and orientations when they first arrived. A few additional comments about beliefs from the qasgiq days are in order, beliefs westerners would characterize as religious.

As addressed earlier, traditional Yup'iks believed all humans and animals had "persons." It is tempting but inaccurate to equate these persons with western/Christian souls. Instead, there were "several different essences that separated from the body at death" (Morrow, 1984, p. 128); although people have used the various terms inconsistently, at least one of these essences crossed the border to the underworld. It was another aspect of the spiritual self that was passed on through the recycling of the deceased's name, yet these two aspects of the individual's self were not wholly separate, for naming created a channel from the everyday world to the underworld and the essence that traveled there (Fienup-Riordan, 1994). After more than a century of Christianity, it is hard to know more exactly how death fit into traditional Yup'ik metaphysics, but the multiplicity (and current indeterminacy) of aspects of being reinforces that there was no easy dualism between sacred and profane.

The other traditional concept that has some resemblance to a Christian concept is *ellam yua*, "the person of the universe" or perhaps "the awareness of the weather or the outside" (Fienup-Riordan, 1994). I have heard the phrase translated simply as God, though the direct correspondence probably is fairly recent, and I think *ellam yua* was (is?) not the omniscient and omnipotent being that the Christian God is usually constructed to be.

Records suggest that the missionary response to the Yup'ik – and Yup'ik response to the missionaries – varied depending on the faith tradition. Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Moravian (Protestant) churches all established missions in the YK Delta; most contemporary villages have one dominant tradition. Of published sources, most historical material is about the Orthodox and Moravians; more recent work includes the Catholics.

Moravian mission

The Moravians sent the most personally influential missionaries, John and Edith Kilbuck. With others, they chose to base their efforts at the site of present-day Bethel; today an elementary school, a street, and a small mountain range all are named for them. Of individual missionaries, the Kilbucks spent the longest total time in the area. They gained extensive facility with the language. John, an inveterate traveler, became well-known around the region while Edith genuinely engaged with the local community in Bethel. John, a Delaware Indian and more darkly complected than other outsiders, was adopted to some extent by a downriver village who claimed he must be a descendant of a local man who had drifted away to sea on an ice floe a century or so before (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch.4).

For the Kilbucks, Christian and cultural conversion were of a piece. They were religious enough not to accept the western division between sacred and profane, and they sought to infuse all aspects of life with the values and knowledge they found in their faith. Edith wrote in an unpublished article, ““So hand in hand with the message of salvation went the duties of teaching better living here and

now” (quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 1991, p. 76). Among other things, the Kilbucks urged people to build wooden houses above ground, to live in nuclear family units, to eat cooked food, to improve their personal hygiene, to adopt monogamy and permanent marriage, to pray daily, and to refrain from work on Sundays (Fienup-Riordan, 1991).

But despite a vision which merged faith and daily life more than other Americans’, the Kilbucks’ understanding of Yup’ik spirituality was still grounded in western categories that distinguished between spiritual practices and secular ones, and they were unprepared for a metaphysics as wholly integrated as the Yup’iks’. Thus, they explicitly discouraged the traditional Yup’ik activities which they identified as religious but tolerated, even participated in, other practices which were less obviously part of the same belief system. The Kilbucks set out to show themselves more powerful than the shamans; the medical care they provided, for example, was intended to discredit the shamans as well as alleviate suffering. They increasingly attempted to proscribe ceremonials as their meanings became clearer. (See Fienup-Riordan, 1991; Oswalt, 1990.)

Fienup-Riordan (1991) points out the underlying cultural conversion processes that the Kilbucks introduced. Two cultural lessons are most significant. First, through the clock and the calendar, time became a commodity to be used well or ill. And second, by teaching school children and the adult church “Helpers” to read – at one level, for the straightforward reason that they needed to be able to read the Bible – “language would be for the first time taken out of its immediate context”

(p. 83; cf. Mather, 1995). Words and The Word were no longer tied to local speech acts.

Much of the Kilbucks' success in their mission came from happenstance. Most importantly, there were areas of superficial congruence between Yup'ik and Moravian cosmologies. For example (see Fienup-Riordan, 1991), both groups distinguished between the finitude of people and the infinite qualities of God or the universe; both believed in the power of speech; both emphasized personal responsibility for one's actions. Christian metaphors regarding the sacrifice of the Lamb of God resonated with the Yup'ik belief in the willing sacrifice of animals to hunters, while the language of rebirth through Christ echoed the Yup'ik belief in the recycling of persons.

The Kilbucks also benefited from the epidemics that preceded them. So many people had died, and village social relations were disorganized enough, that some Elders had to go to the mission rather than family for aid, and orphans had no other adults to care for them – or to protest their enrollment in school. Both groups thereby provided some ready converts (Fienup-Riordan, 1991). Also, although the Moravians largely dismissed the impact of Russian Orthodox mission work as superficial³¹ and ended up competing with some Orthodox clergy (see below), they did have groundwork laid for them in some communities insofar as the stories of the Bible at least had been introduced (Oswalt, 1963a).

³¹ See Flanders (1984) regarding an unspecified Protestant sect's similar critique of Jesuit (Catholic) missionaries along the Yukon River.

But much of their success also can be attributed to their methods. John was a charismatic leader and preacher who made himself available to villages widely dispersed through the region; he traveled several thousand miles each year for a decade (Fienup-Riordan, 1991). The Kilbucks' dismay that Yup'iks did not live in nuclear family units notwithstanding, John took full advantage of the social structure of the qasgiq and the patterns of group interaction there (Oswalt, 1963a). The Kilbucks also started a Native Helpers program, in which eager, committed Yup'ik converts were authorized to conduct services and reinforce Christian messages (Fienup-Riordan, 1991). And, the Kilbucks *acted* Yup'ik in key ways, "speaking, eating, traveling, visiting, and gifting.... Insofar as they acted in a Yup'ik manner, their parishioners assumed that they were thinking in Yup'ik manner as well" (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, pp. 90-91).

The Kilbucks were newlyweds when they left for Bethel. All of their children were born there, and for the rest of their lives, they spent little time outside Alaska. It seems reasonable to conjecture that an additional part of their success in the conversion project was due to an unspoken understanding on both sides that they had made their life among the Yup'ik, that at an affective level the Yup'ik were "their people" and, after so much time and day-to-day interaction, they were accepted by the Yup'ik as *their* people as well. This is not to suggest that the Kilbucks "became" or were perceived as Yup'ik, or that the unequal power relations ceased to matter, but given Yup'ik norms of conciliation, I suspect that the personal relationships with the Kilbucks encouraged a desire among the Yup'ik to do what

pleased these outsiders who had so committed their lives to this place and people. Yup'ik practices changed, some Yup'ik beliefs changed, but in the service of other core Yup'ik ideological commitments to relationship.

Yup'ik Orthodoxy

The religious mission of the Russian Orthodox in Alaska was never as inextricably linked to a secular-civilizing mission as the other Christian sects. Perhaps this is because the Russians, especially a century or more ago, were vaguely seen by mainstream Americans as not properly civilized themselves and so whatever “civilizing” they may have thought they were doing has not been understood by westerners as such. Perhaps it is because in comparison to Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy relies so much more on ritual, tradition, and community expression of faith and less on individual experience of conversion (Oleksa, 1992; Ware, 1993), such that the individual behavioral norms which the Kilbucks sought to impose were seen by the Orthodox as less integral to a Christianizing mission. Perhaps it is simply because Orthodox missionaries in Alaska were spread so thin.

The first Orthodox missionary went to Kodiak Island in 1794; subsequent Orthodox evangelized southern and southeastern Alaska before approaching the Yup'ik. The first priest to visit the southwest (see Oswalt, 1990, for a fuller narrative) went to the trading station at contemporary Dillingham in 1829. He baptized some Yup'iks then and again when he returned to the post three years later. He also authorized some area traders to baptize. This last point is important because

although priests were permanently assigned to two villages on the Delta, traders had more regular contact with people, and the chapels they built at the stations helped to pique curiosity about this new belief system and to sustain religious ritual practice. Even after the transfer of Alaska to the U.S., the trader who took over the old Russian post upriver on the Kuskokwim repaired the Orthodox chapel in which he and local Yup'ik worshipped.

As the Russian traders did not try to change everyday Yup'ik life, so the missionaries were likewise instructed "not to force their views upon the natives, not to preach unless invited to do so, to tolerate and respect native custom, and especially not to interfere with established marriages" (Black, 1984, p. 34). The priests had their opinions; for example, just before Alaska became American territory, YK Delta-area priests expressed dismay at such ongoing behaviors as extra-marital sexual activity and reliance on shamans for healing. But in marked contrast to the Moravians, these same priests simultaneously were "pleased" that so many Yup'iks were converting (Oswalt, 1990), an indication that people's behaviors and status as Christians were seen as distinct. And indeed the Orthodox missionaries do not seem to have much disturbed local life. The Moravians were disgusted by the behaviors of the so-called Christian Yup'ik in Orthodox villages, who should have known better than the simple "heathen," suggesting that daily practices had not changed significantly because of conversion (Fienup-Riordan, 1991). And even as late as the 1960s, Oswalt (1963b) observed that the same old man was recognized as a shaman for healing purposes and was an active member of

the Orthodox church and even had been a church leader. It is hard to imagine that Native or missionary Moravians would have tolerated such a dual role.

Himself a Russian Orthodox priest originally from outside Alaska, Oleksa (1992) argues that it is exactly because the Orthodox did not conceptualize traditional beliefs and practices as in opposition to Christianity that the faith was adopted and that it survived. Indeed, he points to several ideological commonalities between the two belief systems. First, the teaching style resonated with qasgiq practices: sacred stories were repeated orally within family and community groups. Second, separation between daily life and religious life, material and supernatural, was minimized. And third, both traditions emphasized the link between the present and the past not just by remembering but by doing again in a sacred timelessness what had “always” been done. Significantly, elaborate ritual probably worked in the missionaries’ favor as well. An early explorer commented that the Yup’ik interpreted the complicated rites of the Orthodox service as similar to one of their own mask festivals (Nelson, quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 1994, p. 320).

The Moravians had intended to establish their Alaskan mission among people who had had no exposure to Christianity. That they ended up in territory already evangelized was due to misinformation (Fienup-Riordan, 1991; Oswalt, 1990). A Moravian Helper’s words to an Orthodox priest, recorded in John Kilbuck’s journal, provide the most dramatic statement of the difference between the two faiths regarding lifestyle/cultural change: “When we were Christians

according to your way of teaching we never tried to live more pure lives, we did not know the meaning of faith or hope, and we did not leave off one of our old heathen superstitions and practices. But these teachers have taught us; we have awakened from darkness...” (quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 1991, p. 203). The criticism was that Orthodox Christianity was not genuine; merely adding new practices to old did not promote the same conversion experience that “pure” living – which happened to better approximate Victorian, *civilized* living – promoted. An Orthodox priest in the Aleutians provides a response. When Protestant missionaries claimed that Aleuts had not truly converted but only displayed “outward religiosity,” rather as the Moravians thought, the priest replied, “It is not just hypocrisy, for they do not know how to sham. It cannot be habit – just try to get into the habit of standing for two hours at a time (at church services) or the habit of giving your last penny for a good cause...No; this outward religiosity of theirs is the fruit of an inward and sincere disposition of the heart” (quoted in Oleksa, 1992, p. 176). What the Orthodox looked for as indication of conversion was quite different, but their concern for its genuine presence was no less real.

Contemporary Yup’ik Christianity

Native activist and scholar Deloria (1994) implies that modern American Indians are Christians only if they attended mission schools, and he argues that Christianity and tribal religions cannot be blended. “Native American clergy are to be congratulated for their efforts to bring the two religious traditions together, but it is clear that no synthesis will take place” (p. 253). Perhaps because of Alaska

Natives' different histories with outsiders, Deloria's analysis does not apply in Alaska. (I continue to focus on the Central Yup'ik, but see Chance, 1990; Dorais, 1997; John, 1996; and Jolles, 1990; on the integration of Christianity into local identity and practice among other Alaska Natives and Inuit).

For example, the Russian Orthodox – more accurately, the Yup'ik Orthodox – Christmas celebration of *selaviq* consists of a week (or more) of visiting every home in the village for feasting, song, and gifting and is a highlight of the Yup'ik liturgical year. At a functional level, *selaviq*, celebrated mostly by inland communities, parallels the modern coastal seal parties mentioned earlier; it provides a mechanism for redistributing wealth through the community. And not unlike traditional ceremonies in its feasting and spirit of generosity, *selaviq* also celebrates people's identity as Yup'ik (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 5). To this end, despite historical conflicts between the sects, Moravian communities now celebrate *selaviq* as well. At one *selaviq* I attended years ago (in an Orthodox village), the priest's sermon at the first home we visited that day invoked "our connection to our ancestors and our families in a timeless present....What they did hundreds of years ago in Russia, and for many years here in this village, and on this day in other villages, we do now....This is who we are."

Christmas does not merely provide a legitimating gloss on an older practice, however; *selaviq* also celebrates people's commitment to a locally negotiated Christianity. Clergy and lay believers in all three sects "are making conscious

choices based on perceived areas of congruities between Yup'ik and [Christian] systems of meanings” and internalizing them (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, p. 137).

Fienup-Riordan (2000, ch. 3,4) calls the process through which such different traditions are blended “metaphoric incorporation.” The use of metaphor is a common and fruitful Yup'ik rhetorical device, she has found, and the metaphorical thinking that privileges “like” and “as” over difference is, she argues, distinctively Yup'ik. Though certainly not limited to a religious domain, such thinking stands out in this context, in which both Christianity and traditional practices are woven together in ways that “explain [both of] them, validate them, and put them on equal footing” (p. 105), re-interpreting certain traditions without sacrificing the core principles. The many metaphors used in the Bible are borrowed and added to by Yup'ik believers. Traditional practices are thus retained or rediscovered, creating a link with the past. For example, one Yup'ik Catholic deacon now describes the meaning of Eskimo dancing and their incorporation into the Mass like this: “To me the dances are prayers. They are prayers that come down from our ancestors” (quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 2000, pp. 131-2). Lay people, too, make similar comparisons, as when a eucharistic minister characterizes the practice of sprinkling water on the ground, the purpose of which used to be to feed the dead, as now blessing the spirits (p. 125).³²

³² I add some observations from the time I spent living in Bethel, for my experience reinforces the extent to which Christianity has become a vital component of contemporary Yup'ik life. First, general lifestyle differences among the three groups, especially the Moravians and Orthodox, have faded as modernity has changed life in all settlements. Second, Christianity, writ large, has been universally accepted, and true to the spirit of both sects described at length, as well as traditional

Although this dissertation is not about Native spiritual beliefs, and religion/Christianity will come up only as a side issue in the dissertation analysis, I have addressed missionaries and Christianity in the YK Delta at some length. In the brief description of village life which comprises chapter 4, I show Catholicism to be a taken-for-granted part of village life, and though I had access to no material on Catholic missionaries, I think this section helps make sense of that phenomenon. Also, to the extent people draw on spiritual resources in times of trouble, some understanding of what they draw on is important. Furthermore, I think a better understanding of Alaska Native spirituality has implications for social work practice. If Yup'ik/Native hybrid spirituality is framed as Christian *and* draws on traditional principles, we need to bring together the so-far distinct strands of social work literature on working with both traditional Native healing systems and Christian churches.

A Catholic deacon said, "It had to take the Son of God to teach people to live like the Yup'iks" (quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 1990, p. 81). The Yup'ik have integrated a new, incarnate sense of the holy into their cosmology because they found enough similarity between their own and the missionaries' principles and

Yup'ik cosmology, spirituality/religion are more integrated into daily life than in many parts of the US, at least the urban US. Certainly I have never lived in any other place where "everybody" went to church, where the public radio station played (Yup'ik-language) hymns on Sunday mornings, where the spring fishing season began with the Orthodox ritual blessing of the boats. This raises two questions for me. One, kuss'aq residents of present-day Bethel typically do not get their boats blessed and do not seem to attend church as consistently, and I wonder if practicing Christianity has become a new marker of Yup'ik identity. "We" are believers; "they" (well, some of them) are not. Second, I wonder whether the inter-denominational popularity of the broadcast hymns, selaviq, etc., indicates a spirit of ecumenism or a lack of appreciation for the sectarian differences among the groups.

practices to overlook the contradictions. I suspect this model carries the seeds of how to think about a hybridized social work.

Human Development & Family Relationships

In this penultimate section of the chapter, I take another step closer to social issues and social work in the YK Delta. Many social problems, in rural Alaska and elsewhere, are constructed as about individuals. Other problems (sometimes the same problems) are constructed as about larger client systems or issues, but troubled individuals are the indicators of their presence and still desire/require services. Either way, much social work practice is organized around individual clients and perhaps their families. In this section, therefore, I summarize the literature on Eskimo (Yup'ik and Inuit/Inupiat) and other Alaska Native understandings of human development within an evolving family context.

A cautionary note: most contemporary research in this area has been conducted in arctic Canada. Where not stated otherwise, this material resonates with claims made about/by the Yup'ik in other contexts and helps me make sense of my experiences in the YK Delta. I believe that most of these findings can be applied to the Yup'ik, but different traditional cultures and different experiences with outsiders make wholesale knowledge transfer unwise.

I organize this section according to the stages of development indicated by Collings's (2000) informants (and using their English terms). Collings interviewed Inuit adults who fell into two groups (cf. G. D. Reimer, 1996), those raised

primarily in nomadic hunting camps where subsistence was very much a practical as well as ideological focus of everyday life, and those raised primarily in settlements such as his research site – which sounds rather like Bethel in terms of available services, amenities, and wage labor jobs, but smaller and less central for other communities than Bethel is. Despite some difference in emphasis between cohorts and between genders, he found consensus for six developmental stages, with transitions marked by physical growth and decline, and especially by acquisition of certain attitudes and emotional stances. Chronological age was fairly unimportant except as it affected the application of institutional rules (e.g., mandatory school attendance, old-age benefits eligibility).

As I explore the stages of individual development, I include material about family and community relationships and expectations, including some on traditional family configurations and expectations. I begin with adults, as they are the group who most embody those qualities of maturity which are thought to define being human.

Adults and Middle-Aged People

For the traditional (and to a large degree, for contemporary) Yup'ik and the Inuit, the process of maturing was fundamentally about “becoming aware” or “waking up” – images used by members of both groups (Collings, 2000; Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 4). Individuals were considered aware and awake,³³ i.e., they

³³ I should say, they were considered aware and awake *enough*, for I do not suggest there was an end point to the process.

were considered adults, when they had achieved *ihuma* (an Inuit word), a combination of wisdom, emotional stability, and responsibility “that makes it possible for a person to respond to his [*sic*] surroundings, physical and social, and to conform to social expectations” (Briggs, 1970, p. 359; cf. Briggs, 1979). The social/emotional component of *ihuma* was especially important. Someone with *ihuma* was happy (but content rather than ecstatic), not inclined to brood or engage in confrontation; “calm” and “amiable” are the words Fienup-Riordan used for the Yup’ik ideal (1994, p. 55; cf. C. S. Reimer, 1996, on “personal well-being”). S/he was also playful. Even in situations understood to be serious, adults maintained a pretense of lightness: the person with the serious message expressed it as a joke, perhaps exaggerating (almost) to the point of absurdity, so the recipient of an implied criticism could laugh it off with apparent equanimity even while considering it. In brief, a mature person – in the village English of at least one Inuit community, a “smart” person – “is responsible, works hard, does not make demands of others, laughs at his/her own mistakes, controls his/her emotions, avoids conflict, and without interfering anticipates the needs of others” (Stern, 1999, p. 508).

As adulthood was largely a state of mind, so was there an element of choice and intention in becoming an adult: “he or she wants to be perceived as an adult by others. One therefore begins to act accordingly,” Collings (2000, p. 121) found in the study of developmental stages. He found, too, that individuals who might have been categorized as adults according to chronological age were not if they didn’t behave as such.

In the qasgiq days, Yup'ik young people moved from childhood directly into adulthood. Once children had mastered their subsistence tasks and had attained adequate ihuma – seen as related within the framework of yuuyaraq³⁴ – they were seen as grown. Traditionally, girls were about twelve to fourteen years old when they first married, boys between eighteen and twenty-six (Fienup-Riordan, 1983). Parents typically arranged marriages, but there was still a period when parents-in-law evaluated the spouse who perhaps had just joined their winter camp group (there is disagreement among scholars as to whether wives joined husbands' families or vice versa). Men and women continued to observe strict spatial and behavioral rules in their interactions while they lived in the qasgiq and satellite houses (Fienup-Riordan, 1994), and even after the missionaries persuaded nuclear families to reside together, the qasgiqs continued to function as a male working/gathering/bathing space until after WWII (Hensel, 1996).

In general, marriage was not seen as a lifetime commitment prior to the missionaries' arrival, and sometimes after. Divorce was simply a matter of leaving or not taking food to the qasgiq. Marriages tended to stabilize after children arrived, but when they did not, serial spouses accepted each others' children, adding further to children's relationships within the community. Additional adult relationships came of co-marriage. Formerly understood as wife swapping, co-marriage has been

³⁴ Earlier I emphasized acquiring yuuyaraq as a key task for children in the qasgiq. I think ihuma is a compatible concept. My understanding is that where yuuyaraq encompasses the content of what should be learned – the interconnections among all persons and actions, the rules for living, how to treat people, etc. – ihuma is the personal quality of having incorporated an appreciation for yuuyaraq

re-interpreted as another mechanism for establishing kinship bonds in which women actively participated. (See Chance, 1988; Fienup-Riordan, 1988; Lantis, 1960; Oswalt, 1963b.)

More recently, marriage has been idealized as permanent,³⁵ and partners are older and closer in age. Twenty years ago, brides usually were eighteen to twenty-two years old, grooms twenty-five to twenty-eight (Fienup-Riordan, 1983), and couples might not marry until they had a child together (Chance, 1990). Given ongoing changes in women's employability and decreased economic dependence on men's subsistence activities, I suspect the average age of marriage has increased further, and there are also growing trends toward Native women marrying white men or choosing not to marry (Hensel, 1996).³⁶

Notably, the movement into adulthood was the sole life stage transition recognized in part by an outward change in domestic status, i.e. marriage and/or children, though domestic changes were not necessary to adult status (Collings, 2000).

into one's everyday life. In keeping with a Yup'ik (and Inuit) orientation toward indeterminacy, I suspect the concepts are less distinct than I draw them here.

³⁵ Shinkwin & Pete (1983) argue that the expectation of one lifelong marriage has contributed to the rise of domestic violence. Whereas before women (or men) could end the relationship if threatened, now Yup'ik women are more likely to feel stuck. They add that the marriage *ceremony* may heighten the felt commitment to stay, as Yup'iks have never "dismissed lightly" their ceremonial obligations (p. 26).

³⁶ Hensel (1996, p. 132) provides one telling quote from an interview with a Yup'ik woman who lived in Bethel. Newly engaged to a white man and visiting her home village, she was confronted by a young man for marrying out. "I said, 'I'm going to school, I'm here for a break. I'm going back to a job, I'm here for a break. I'm getting all of these things for myself and making this kind of life for myself. You're here, you're sitting, you're drunk. You live in your mom's home. You expect me to come back and marry you?' And that really shut him up, you know."

Apart from marriage and children, G.D. Reimer (1996) has identified a “female consciousness” among adult Inuit women, their “recognition and acceptance of the culturally defined gender role they are expected to fulfill” (p. 79). She found that for the most part, contemporary Inuit women have not protested their caretaking domain (in contrast to women with a “feminist consciousness,” who seek role redefinition). Significantly, however, they have expanded their caretaking to include community/ political engagement – largely in order to protect their ability to care for their families. As part of claiming and preserving their traditional role, women have had to act in “non-traditional” ways involving publicity, direct confrontation, and demand. “I think I’m *the mother* of this whole town,” (Blackman, 1989, p. xii, emphasis added) said an Inupiat woman in Barrow who spent decades balancing a series of public service jobs, including magistrate, with raising her many children. Her metaphor is telling.

That these women use strategies not identified as Native to achieve ends they see as consistent with the past reinforces the earlier point about privileging some principles over rigid, essentialized practices. Stern (1999) points to the challenges inherent in combining roles and tasks for modern Inuit and Yup’ik adults:

Much of the new work requires behaviors that are antithetical to the traditional values of non-interference and non-demandingness that is such a critical component of traditional intelligence [ihuma] in [this Inuit community]. While this is especially obvious for Inuit *social*

workers, teachers and law enforcement officers, ...[others] also find that they must supervise and direct the activities of others. Thus, it is often necessary to situationally suspend traditional sensibilities regarding intelligence [and maturity] in order to be effective in the new economic regime (pp. 511-512, my emphasis).

Collings (2000) did not dwell on the “middle-aged” life stage, and I have not sought other research focusing on older adults. I assume the distinction his informants drew between younger/unhyphenated adults and middle-aged adults indicated their recognition of deepened *ihuma* and advancement toward Elder status.

Old Men/Old Women

The “old” life stage was marked by activity, or its relative absence. “One becomes old not when he or she gets wrinkles and gray hair but when he or she displays the characteristics of being old: withdrawing from community life, ‘slowing down,’ and ‘feeling lazy’” (Collings, 2000, p. 121).

It surprises me that “Elder” was not named explicitly as a stage by Collings’ informants. I can think of two reasons why it was not; which of them (or something else entirely) is right is impossible to know. First, perhaps it was named as “old,” and I misunderstand (though it would still surprise me that the word Elder was not used). Perhaps the (northern Canadian) village English term “slowing down” implies “Elder;” for example, perhaps the phrase carries a sense of increased opportunity for reflection and/or increased availability for counsel and informal

leadership. Second, perhaps the people I have come to think of as Elders in the YK Delta do not carry the same influence in Collings' research community, and the seats by the qasgiq door, as it were, are permanently empty. It is striking that in other research conducted in the same community (all of Condon and Stern), Elders are absent. Most of this other research focuses on teens, and I cannot say whether the Elders had a limited presence in the community overall, or just in the teens' lives – or just in the research reports.

In Yup'ik traditional cosmology, the persons (name-souls) of old people passed to the next generation at their death. So I turn to the next stage of cyclical human development: babies.

Babies

Traditional Inuit childrearing was geared toward providing children opportunities to achieve *ihuma*. As I will discuss, *ihuma* continues to be an organizing principle for interactions with children and for the evaluation of maturity, but contemporary communities' capacity to accommodate the principle as traditionally enacted is threatened.³⁷

Inuit babies and young children elicited *nallik-*, an adult emotional response of concern or pity, nurturance, and affection towards those who were physically helpless and/or lacked *ihuma*; alternatively, it “was also conceived of as a mature form of attachment” (Briggs, 1995, p. 25). Babies and children reciprocated with

³⁷ Where not stated otherwise, the material for this and the next sections comes from Briggs (1970; 1979; 1995; 1998), the doyenne of Eskimo emotions and emotional processes.

unga-, the immature form of attachment that might be glossed loosely as separation anxiety (in a non-clinical usage) or yearning for the *nallik-* figure. Both could be taken to inappropriate extremes. Too much *nallik-*, especially of older children or adults, could bleed into overprotectiveness and control; too much *unga-*, especially in older children or adults, was seen as childish dependency. A balance that echoes – and indicates – the development of *ihuma* “was to *nallik-* other people universally, but moderately, circumspectly, and in proportion to their needs – not so much that it was painful to others or oneself. At the same time, one was supposed to *unga-* selectively in childhood and outgrow it as an adult” (Briggs, 1995, p. 27).

Within the framework of *ihuma*, traditional Yup’ik patterns of child care make sense. Early observers such as Moravian missionaries interpreted the treatment of babies and very young children as spoiling them (Fienup-Riordan, 1988). But “babies” – infants and children up to age three or four – lacked *ihuma*. The expectation “of even-tempered restraint” (Briggs, 1970, p. 9) could not apply to them, and so “infant care consisted primarily of keeping the baby happy” (Chance, 1990, p. 97). One unique component of *unga-* interactions with babies was adults’ singing or chanting the baby’s own special nonsense song (Crago, Annahatak, & Ningiuruvik, 1993).

Babies were surrounded by people who cared about their happiness, who probably knew their special nonsense song. As indicated, they took on the relationships of their deceased namesake relatives. Adopted children also garnered additional relationships (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, ch. 6; Morrow & Pete, 1996).

Adoptees did not sever their biological ties but added to them with their new caretaking family. The adoption was as likely to occur because the family wanted a(nother) baby as because the child needed a home. By one estimate, 35% of a Yup'ik community's population of 300 might be adopted, about a third of them by grandparents; another indicator of adoption's widespread practice is the presence of seven Yup'ik words for the idea (Morrow & Pete, 1996).

Kids

As “babies” developed into “kids,” and through childhood, adults engaged in playful, yet wholly serious, socialization exchanges with youngsters. Question games about children's relationships to others taught them how they fit in and reinforced the importance of those relationships (Chance, 1988). Considerably more challenging, but still playful, interactions pushed children to think about roles and possibilities and to learn to handle them calmly. The emotional plot of these games “presents problems – often in the form of value conflicts – and dramatizes them, so that they are made conceptually clear and also emotionally vivid; it involved the child by making him [sic] solve the problems” in a safe setting (Briggs, 1979, p. 39).³⁸

³⁸ See Briggs (1998) for a fascinating yet disturbing examination of one little girl's experience of these games. I confess that when I first read this book, some of the emotional challenges she was presented with struck me as verging on emotionally abusive, for example, teasing her with dilemmas about whom she would live with “since” her parents died. With her mother in the room, clearly she had not died, yet the possibility of death was now present in the child's mental world. Traditionally, of course, life was precarious, and the deaths of one's parents and other *nellik*-figures was not unlikely.

Any adult could play with children in this way, but generally only parents or grandparents delivered lectures or scoldings. These “serious” exchanges were infrequent, thus the perception that Inuit and Yup’ik babies and children were spoiled, for undesirable behavior was seen not as willfulness but as forgetting due to unformed *ihuma*. Laughter and an indirect reminder about right behavior, or simply ignoring the negative behavior, were considered enough of a response; eventually the child’s *ihuma* would develop to “the point where he will, of his own accord, see the reasonableness of adult instructions and will conform” (Briggs, 1979, p. 18; cf. Chance, 1990).

Such logic in the face of perceived childishness is still used – including with some adults, such as *kuss’aq* researchers, whose *ihuma* is seen as inadequately developed (e.g. Stern, 1999). Childcare practices and context are changing, however, in ways that make the “adult” outcome less predictable. Chance (1990) has observed an increase in the use of direct admonitions. And with the advent of regular schooling, as well as engagement with other institutions (e.g. hospitals), children have been exposed to conflicting expectations that at least leave them confused, and in some cases also impel parents to alter their behavior. For example, younger Inuit mothers in arctic Quebec have intentionally changed the way they interact with their children in order to foster communicative patterns that will enhance their school success. Where children used to learn largely through silent observation and listening, and their ability to follow directions marked their progress, more recently they have been allowed, even encouraged, to ask questions

and speak up at home as well as at school (Crago, 1992; Crago et al., 1993; cf. D. L. McLean, 1997). Furthermore, because kids are at school, and because more parents work at paid jobs, parents have fewer opportunities for everyday displays of nellik-, such that many parents are giving their children more material treats to signal their affection. But the children's accumulation of stuff further changes interactional and socialization patterns.

There is a facile conclusion to be drawn here: that non-interfering parenting is no longer functional and must change. It was to begin to address such assertions empirically that Sprott (1992) conducted her interviews with Alaska Native parents regarding both how they had been parented and how they now parented their young children. She did not finally evaluate the modern effectiveness of traditional parenting strategies, but she did find evidence that parenting practices and attitudes are conservative.³⁹ Even among Sprott's urban (Anchorage) sample of parents, some of whose own families of origin could be characterized as quite "dysfunctional," attitudes and practices echoed what Briggs (above) found one and two generations ago. Sprott's research participants were more likely than Briggs' to use direct discipline, and they tended to be more emotionally expressive than they experienced their own parents as having been, but they were still emotionally restrained and "loosely" structured. Notably, several framed their approach as demonstrating "respect for the child," which may hearken back to a sense that

³⁹ Assuming that these practices and attitudes will eventually change, Condon (1990a) calls this phenomenon a "socialization lag."

respect shown to a specific child is in fact shown to the timeless person carried in (symbolized by) the name, and the previous holder of that name (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, ch. 6).

Sprott cautions that although readers of her study may want to label Native parents as “permissive,” “the concept of parental permissiveness is imbued with negativity in the dominant culture” (1992, p. 65). I would add that not only does the designation come laden with evaluation, it also is based on cultural assumptions that children’s developing selves require active formation. To the extent that Alaska Native parents have continued to think (regardless of whether they articulate it) that children develop ihuma naturally and that their job is to give the process time to happen, being anything but permissive makes no sense – except as accommodation to non-Native norms.

Teenagers

Traditionally, Yup’iks marked with varying amounts of feasting and fanfare children’s and youths’ subsistence and physiological “firsts”: girls’ first picked berry and boys’ first killed bird through girls’ first menstruation and boys’ first killed caribou or bearded seal (Fienup-Riordan, 1988, 1994; Oswalt, 1990). Once these rites of passage were completed, in tandem with the development of overall maturity, young people moved directly into their prescribed adult roles. By the 1960s, however, young Inupiat on the North Slope often did not master their subsistence activities until their late teens or twenties, perhaps until after marriage (Chance, 1990). This postponement of subsistence expertise was part of the

creation of adolescence as a new developmental stage between physical maturation and the assumption of adult responsibility.

Most of the research on Eskimo adolescents has been conducted by Condon (1987; 1990a; 1990b; 1992; 1995). His central problematic is how young people, mostly young men, deal with coming of age in a world that is fundamentally different from their parents' and grandparents'. "Because the margin of survival has become greatly expanded, young people are no longer required to attain social maturity at such an early age, but can spend most of their teens and even early twenties in comparative idleness" (1990b, p. 273) he wrote; I would add that this stage can extend even beyond the early twenties (cf. Hensel, 1996).

Condon did longitudinal fieldwork in one central Canadian Inuit community over the course of more than fifteen years. His summary of changes in this research site is accurate for YK Delta communities: "small and isolated...[with recent] population concentration, population growth, increased economic security, and increased exposure to southern [western, modern, kuss'aq] value systems" (1990b, p. 266). However, his research community, at least as he describes it, seems to have differed from Yup'ik communities in two important regards. First, Elders were absent, both as actual people and as a moral or ideological presence. Second, subsistence was largely absent as well. Condon conceptualized hunting as an economic activity which was no longer crucial for sustenance, and anyway, he was more interested in teens' relationship with the kuss'aq world. I suspect the "ideology of subsistence" was more present in this Inuit community than he

described; recall from earlier discussion that Stern (2000), working in the same community, did find subsistence to be an important part of young men's identity even if not of their daily activities.

Despite the differences, Condon documented changes in attitudes and behaviors among youth that I think provide insight into Yup'ik youth.

When Condon began his work, teens' behavior and attitudes resonated with developing *ihuma*, though he never explored that concept explicitly; they acted with restraint and humor. In the specific context of organized sports (Condon, 1987, ch. 5; 1995), the early emphasis was on entertainment rather than competition, and "those conflicts or misunderstandings that did occur were shrugged off immediately by the antagonists, often under the guise of humor and joking" (1995, p. 54). However, in the decades from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the ethos of organized team sports changed and now emphasizes the ranking of players' skills and confrontation. Condon suggested that the increased presence of television was a contributing factor, insofar as Inuit youth saw other forms of expression, in the context of sports in particular. Now community sports are institutionalized with a system of rules and penalties – and grudges – that he has interpreted as young people relying more on southern/western forms of conflict resolution. He reported that it took longer for traditional games to become competitive, but that inter-community matches have stressed the value of winning in that context as well.

In all of his analyses, Condon has highlighted how youth aspire to western jobs but have had limited opportunities to obtain them. Unlike in Alaska (see

below), rural Inuit youth must leave home to attend high school, and they have had few models of individuals who have gone to high school and completed it; of those who have, even fewer have returned home to live. (This sounds like the situation regarding college in rural Alaska.) Meanwhile, Condon reported, young people have wanted to remain in their small, kin-oriented community,⁴⁰ but there were few jobs available there, though social assistance payments reduced the urgency of work for meeting economic needs. Although a mixed economy including subsistence is more active in rural Alaska, the dilemma Condon presented is the same for Yup'ik youth: what to do with a lot of time, either after or instead of school, spent mostly with one's peers rather than intergenerational family members (though the histories of the communities are such that peers are likely to be cousins).

Within this context, Condon (1995) has argued, I think compellingly, that organized sports are quite important. Socially and psychologically, players benefit from interactions with peers struggling with similar developmental issues, from an outlet for ritualized and real aggression, and from a sanctioned opportunity for achieving status. Condon's argument puts me in mind of traditional Yup'ik ceremonials, some of which also provided opportunities for ritualized emotional expression and which also covered aggression with a veneer of fun and jokes; and of the "man indeed" (Fienup-Riordan, 1988) hunter's status.

⁴⁰ When Alaska Native students in villages and regional towns were asked "what it was like being a teenager in their town or village," they almost always said, "Boring!" and that there was nothing to do; however, village students were unlikely to anticipate moving away from the village (Hamilton & Seyfrit, 1993).

While teenage Eskimo girls play sports and spend considerable time with their friends, adolescence as a new developmental stage seems to have been somewhat less problematic for young women than for men. Women under age 25 were not only the first to be raised in settlements rather than traditional hunting camps, but they also came of age after the feminist struggles of the last forty years in the west/south. In contrast to their mothers' "female consciousness," G.D. Reimer (1996) has found a consciousness "with feminist hues" among young Inuit women. Earlier I discussed women's easier transition into the wage workforce, relative to men's; this seems to have shaped teen girls' expectations, such that they are more likely than their male classmates to anticipate careers (Hamilton & Seyfrit, 1993). When they do not have paid jobs, they are still likely to have less leisure than males due to childcare and other household responsibilities while in high school and afterwards.

Role of school

"While there is no doubt that the newest generation of parents is trying to exert more control over their children, they are also relying more heavily upon the school as a primary socialization agent" (Condon, 1990a, p. 91). The point that Inuit parents seem uncertain about their role relative to the schools is congruent with the findings of a recent study on attitudes about formal education conducted among Alaska Native parents and community members (Alaska Native education study: A statewide study of Alaska Native values and opinions regarding education in Alaska, 2001, "Education study"). Since the so-called Molly Hootch court decision

in the 1970s,⁴¹ almost every rural Alaskan community has had a high school. Village schools tend to be very small, and there are ongoing concerns about their quality and purpose. For example, “Education study” participants (survey respondents, focus group participants, and key informants for long interviews) said in the abstract that parents and communities were mostly responsible for students’ school success, yet their suggestions for improvement were focused on the schools changing. 91% of survey respondents said it was “very important” or “important” to teach about Alaska Native cultures in school (ch. 4, p. 8; cf. McLean, 1997). Kawagley (1995) and Morrow (1987), among others, have made some inroads into discerning what such lessons might look like, and it is not uncommon to find Elders and others in the schools. Still, the study documented the perception of an ongoing lack of connection between families and schools. Meanwhile, students who aspire to college worry about their academic preparedness (cf. Hamilton & Seyfrit, 1993).

Interestingly, the “Education study” also showed strong support for regional boarding schools, especially among those who attended boarding school themselves. Yup’ik informants were the most likely to have attended an in-state boarding high school. The report does not say which schools informants attended, but other research has indicated that the Catholic boarding school in St. Mary’s, a Yup’ik village located on a tributary of the Yukon, provided a formal education without

⁴¹ Rural students, of whom Hootch was the first plaintiff named, sued the state claiming that they did not have the equal access to education to which they were constitutionally entitled if they had to leave home to obtain it, and that the state was guilty of discrimination because it was mostly minority students who faced this situation. The state of Alaska, newly wealthy from the development of oil on

destroying students' connections to their families and the Yup'ik culture (Kleinfeld, 1979).⁴²

Concluding statements

Young men in particular seem to struggle with how to *grow up*; the final section of this chapter will include statistics that illustrate that struggle all too well. Perhaps a more interventionist version of Condon's central question (how do Inuit youth come of age in such a different world) could be stated, How can we help Yup'ik youth grow into adult roles that feel like they fit, whatever the roles actually are and do.

Notably, Stern (1999) "never heard adults equate being smart [having ihuma] with success in school" (p. 510) in northern Canada, and I doubt that many Yup'iks would make an easy link between school success and maturity either. Nonetheless, I think it important to suggest that academic achievement, or career/wage-work success, and more traditional Yup'ik awareness and wakefulness need not be contradictory. As with Yup'ik Elders wanting to find ways to infuse other core principles into contemporary life, I think the concept that the Inuit express as ihuma can be incorporated into new practices, new work, and new adult

the North Slope following ANCSA, settled the suit and agreed to build a high school in every community that already had an elementary school (Case & Voluck, 2002, "Education study," 2001).
⁴² Contrary to all I've heard and read about Indian boarding schools collectively, and village public schools now, St. Mary's graduates learned to negotiate the kuss'aq world successfully and comfortably even as they were able to return to their villages and easily fit in again back home. One scholar attributes this to the school's being located in and engaged with a village, drawing students from one cultural (and religious) group, and grounding in strong values and relationships that resonated with Yup'ik values and relationships (Kleinfeld, 1979).

roles, as the St. Mary's school seems to have fostered before it closed (Kleinfeld, 1979).

“The ability of individuals to learn reason and emotional maturity is dependent upon social connections across generations, connections that are increasingly threatened by the current social climate of the North” Collings (2000, p. 123) concludes his study of life stages. These connections are apparently less threatened among the Yup'ik than among the Canadian Inuit, but they are weakened, and the reduced participation in subsistence activities of young people plays a role (Fienup-Riordan, 1986b). With maturing into a proper adult Yup'ik human being at risk but by no means a lost cause, I finally turn to social work in the YK Delta.

Social Issues

So far in this literature review, I have featured a variety of issues related to contemporary Yup'ik life. I have provided a statistical sketch of the state, an outline of traditional Yup'ik culture and its core principles, and discussions of governance and sovereignty, subsistence as both economic and ideological system, Yup'ik Christianity, language issues, and local formulations of human development. Given all of that, I can now address selected literature regarding social problems in rural Alaska and the organization of service systems designed to address them. For this section of the literature review, these other domains should at least provide useful background information. I suggest that by the end of the dissertation, I will

have shown them to be crucial to thinking about social work and social service provision in rural Alaska.

There is a significant literature on social work and Native Americans. Alaska Natives are included in national statistics but generally are absent from other discussions unless they are the specific focus. Although I do draw on some of the “lower 48” literature, in keeping with the rest of this chapter, I have chosen to prioritize research about other arctic peoples, especially other Alaska Natives and Inuit; to expand on research about the Yup’ik.

Issues

In conducting a needs assessment intended to help Alaska state and tribal child welfare agencies design family support services, Cunningham (1995) asked community survey respondents (one per sampled household) to rank-order eight issues according respondents’ perception of community prevalence and their perceptions of severity. Results for the state and for the “northern region” (most of the state excluding the southcentral/Anchorage area and the southeast panhandle) were for the most part quite similar to results for the Calista region.

Calista region: 96% Native sample

Perceived prevalence

1. substance abuse
2. teen pregnancy
3. basic needs
4. juvenile crime
5. physical health
6. domestic violence
7. child abuse
8. mental health

Perceived severity

1. substance abuse
2. teen pregnancy
3. child abuse
4. juvenile crime
5. physical health
6. domestic violence
7. basic needs
8. mental health

In preparation for the analysis of village social service provision, I highlight two items on these lists, both of which I will return to. First, the first-place ranking of substance abuse. People are acutely aware of the effects of alcohol, in particular, in their communities. Second, the last-place ranking of mental health. In a separate study, Alaska Natives said the term “mental health” was not locally meaningful although people were concerned about issues which professionals would consider to be mental health issues (Minton & Soule, 1990). It is possible that the behaviors/attitudes/expressions Cunningham and his agency collaborators intended to capture in the survey question were not understood by household respondents, leading to their ranking the issue last. (Key informant respondents, many of them human service providers more likely to be familiar with the term, ranked mental health higher, especially on severity.) This question of comprehension is important because of the choices provided, suicide would best fall under mental health, and it too is a key issue in these communities. In fact, in the other study (Minton & Soule, 1990), respondents were asked an open-ended question about what made them sad, and “death” was the category into which fell the greatest number of answers. Deaths caused by suicide may well have been part of that category; in addition, the grief and loss experienced after unintentional deaths would best fall into the mental health category.

Substance abuse and suicide, as well as child abuse and juvenile crime (also on the lists), prove relevant in the upcoming ethnography, and so I address some selected literature and statistics on each. My aim here is to provide an orientation to

each issue as context for what follows. After a brief exploration of each of these problem areas, I begin to explore some key dilemmas inherent to service provision for a people who see themselves/are seen as culturally distinct and who live in very isolated communities.

Suicide

The numbers are sobering. Marshall (1999) collected data on suicides and accidental deaths among Natives in the YK Delta – so mostly Yup'iks – for the twenty-year period 1979-1998. Despite variation from year to year, he identifies a trend in which suicide rates rose; comparing the five-year periods 1979-1983 and 1994-1998, the rates increased from 44 to 67 per 100,000 people. For comparison, in the 1990s, Alaska Natives' overall suicide rate was 42.3 per 100,000, the state of Alaska's rate was 20.3 per 100,000, and the U.S. rate was 10.3 per 100,000 (Leask et al., 2001).⁴³

In line with information about other Native American groups (e.g., Angell, Kurz, & Gottfried, 1997), Marshall (1999) reports that males aged 15-29 comprised the group most at risk for suicide and that few male or female decedents had been steadily employed.

Never married males predominate throughout the 20-year period: they account for between 66 and 88 percent of the total, depending on the [5-year] period. Firearms were used in 83-95 percent of the cases. At least

three-quarters of these deaths are alcohol-related – as many as 91 percent in the period 1985-1990. Similarly, most suicides give prior indications of their intent consistently across all periods: 84 percent or more....[M]ale high-school students of school-leaving age especially are at great risk....High school students were an even higher proportion of the females... (pp. 31-32).

Marshall identifies differences among small clusters of villages, where some had very high rates and some very low, but he could only speculate that cultural strength, religion, language, and/or local decision-making influenced the differences. In a brief case study comparison of two Delta villages whose suicide rates provide dramatic contrast, however, Fienup-Riordan (2000, ch. 1) squarely attributes the difference to cultural vitality, including language maintenance and local control (these two villages have religion in common).

Crucially, an unpublished study of suicide and other violent deaths in southwestern Alaska reports that region of origin, alcohol use, evidence of family success, and evidence of individual success most distinguishes those who died violently from those in a control group. Furthermore,

[p]ersonal success was the one item which marked the suicide group as different from other violent deaths. This lends itself to the speculation that, given the pressures which we have assumed pushed all of them toward some

⁴³ Though Alaska's rate of suicide is lower than Alaska Natives', that the state rate is so much higher than the U.S. rate reinforces others' point that geographical/regional influences that are not race-

violent extreme, these who were most striving for excellence might be the ones most likely to take deliberate self-destructive actions rather than careless, unplanned ones (Doak & Nachmann, 1987, in Fienup-Riordan, 2000, pp. 22-23).

I have not been able to locate the full research report myself, and the description of it does not define “personal success,” but I assume the authors were speaking of success in kuss’aq terms. I am reminded of Condon’s question in the last section regarding how Inuit youth come of age in the modern world; what does healthy *success* look like in the modern Delta?

Others acknowledge the association between suicide in Native American and indigenous polar communities and rapid, forced social change (e.g., Angell et al., 1997; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Kettl & Bixler, 1993; O’Neil, 1986), though some caution that rapid change cannot be seen by itself as a cause of poor mental health or suicidality (Bjerregaard, Curtis, & Study, 2002).⁴⁴ Comment Kettl & Bixler (1993), “the most important cultural change may in fact be the greater presence of alcohol abuse in the society” (p. 41). In their study of Alaska Native suicide decedents’ hospital case records and those of a matched control group, for example, only alcohol use and a prior suicide attempt distinguished the suicide group. Their findings support those of the unpublished study regarding alcohol use. They probably did not have access to information about social success.

specific may also contribute to Natives’ high rates (Wissow, Walkup, Barlow, Reid, & Kane, 2001).

Child abuse and youth offenses

I have not seen statistics correlating child abuse and neglect with alcohol abuse, but certainly alcohol is widely perceived to facilitate, if not directly cause, child maltreatment (AFN, 1989). Statistics do demonstrate that child protection is disproportionately a concern for Alaska Native children and families. The following are comparative rates (per 1,000 children) of substantiated reports made to the state Division of Family & Youth Services (DFYS) of child harm to Native and white children (Hanna, 2001):

<u>Type of harm</u>	<u>Native</u>	<u>white</u>
Neglect	23.7	3.8
Physical abuse	5.8	2.7
Sexual abuse	2.4	0.9
Mental injury	0.6	0.3

Between 1990-1998, Alaska dropped from first to fourth nationally for rates of child deaths due to injury, but Alaska's rate is still 60% above the national average, and Alaska Native children and teens suffered over 40% of injuries (not all fatal but enough to require medical attention) while making up only 22% of children (Hanna, 2001).

Available statistics also indicate that youth are getting into institutionally-defined trouble. Though comprising 23% of enrolled students statewide, Alaska

⁴⁴ In general, suicide has been shown to have occurred infrequently among Native Americans traditionally (Pine, 1981).

Natives were 36% of high school drop-outs; the southwest region of the state (including but larger than the YK Delta) had the highest school drop-out rate at 11.6% (Hanna, 2001). More positively, rates of reports of crime by youth, 10-17 years old, made to police and forwarded to the juvenile justice system were slightly lower in the southwest region than statewide: between 1996 and 2000, the average annual rate was 58 per 1,000 juveniles compared to 61 per 1,000 statewide (Hanna, 2001). However, the frontline law enforcement officers in most villages are employed by the tribal governments, and their reports are at best inconsistently forwarded to state agencies; the official number of reports for the southwest region is very likely too low.⁴⁵

Youth have not gotten into trouble only according to outside rules, however. C.S. Reimer (1996) found local people to be generally worried about Inupiat youth in Alaska, and minors were a particular concern of Inuit Elders meeting about social control issues in northern Canada (Oosten, 2002).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Among adults, Natives comprise 36% of the prison population but only 16% of the general population; whites comprise 45% of the prison population but 69% of the general population (AFN, 1989; Commission on Tolerance Final Report, 2001). "Available evidence indicates that between 80 and 100 percent of [adult] Native-perpetrated violent crime is alcohol-related" (AFN, 1989, p. 13).

⁴⁶ As law enforcement is usually considered a system distinct from social services, I have not sought literature on youth crime – though as will become clear later in this dissertation, the systems are not locally perceived as separate. Regarding youth lawbreaking, I note that the Inuit have experimented with sending delinquent youth to reinvigorated outpost camps as a cultural alternative to incarceration (Searles, 1998). To my knowledge, Yup'iks have not attempted anything so radical but some communities are working with the Division of Juvenile Justice to handle non-felony cases locally (Knox & Schafer, 2001), and as local tribal courts develop, tribes are widely expected to assume more control over such cases.

Alcohol

Suicide and child abuse are by no means the only issues exacerbated by alcohol. In one of the few studies of domestic violence conducted in the YK Delta, for example, the incidence of battering was “categorically linked by all respondents in the study with the growth of alcohol abuse in the village” (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983, p. 22). That *every* incident of violence involved alcohol, as villagers suggested, seems unlikely; nonetheless, the association was so strong that the local phrase “he drinks like a man” meant “he fights” (p. 91).

Likewise, there seems to be an association between accidental death and alcohol consumption. The rate of accidental deaths decreased over the twenty year period 1979-1998; suggestively, the cluster of villages with the highest rates saw a severe drop when the nearby liquor store, the only one in the region, closed (Marshall, 1999). Other villages in the YK Delta, and most around the state, have exploited the “local option” offered by the state to ban alcohol (for policy history, see Segal, 1999). Analysts “see signs that local [option] controls may be reducing violent deaths” in Native communities statewide (Leask et al., 2001, p. 11).

Alcohol has also been linked to child sexual abuse, depression and other mental/emotional disorders (Rolland, 1994; Segal, 1999).

Alaska Natives had no history of alcohol or other intoxicants until contact with Europeans (Fortuine, 1989), in contrast to some other Native American groups (Abbott, 1996). Drinking was introduced to the YK Delta by Russian traders, and modern patterns of binge drinking are usually attributed to them (Hild, 1987).

Through the 19th century, contemporaneous accounts indicated that alcohol use in the region was not widespread (Fortuine, 1989). However, alcohol, either bottled or homebrewed, was readily available in the region by the 1940s (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Rates of alcohol use and abuse are difficult to estimate, but among youth, according to a recent Youth Behavior Survey (which did not separate rates by ethnicity or rural/urban community), “almost half of Alaska high school students have had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days. Additionally, 34.4% report binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past 30 days)” (Green et al., 1999).⁴⁷

Hild (1987) and Shinkwin & Pete (1982) have problematized the easy use of the word “alcoholism” for Alaska Natives, for they have found that Alaska Natives who abuse alcohol are unlikely to be physically dependent but rather tend to drink copiously until the supply runs out or the drinker is incapacitated. Locally-designated “problem drinkers” in Yup’ik villages (Shinkwin & Pete, 1982) have been characterized as behaving violently and (self-) destructively – and as predominantly male. The local emphasis on behavior is important.⁴⁸ Contrary to stereotypes, these communities also identified both a category of social drinkers and

⁴⁷ Of other drugs, marijuana was the most used by Alaskan high school students: 57.1% had ever used marijuana, and 10.9% had ever used methamphetamines (Green et al., 1999). I have not heard about methamphetamines in the villages. On the other hand, inhalants are common. Only 14.5% of Alaskan high school students reported ever having used inhalants on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey; however, the survey defined inhalants as glue, paint, or sprays (Green et al., 1999), and in the villages, kids sniff gasoline. “Huffing” figures are unavailable, but Segal (1999) characterizes gas-sniffing as “a widespread phenomenon of major proportions” (p. 93).

⁴⁸ Notably, none of the self-described “problem drinkers” in a lower 48 urban sample of American Indians adopted the identity “alcoholic” in the way Alcoholics Anonymous promotes as part of recovery, either, although they made no attempt to disguise their behaviors (Spicer, 2001).

“a belief that a heavy, habitual drinker can become a nondrinker in a short period of time, and furthermore can become a successful nonproblem drinker” (Shinkwin & Pete, 1982, p. 318) – i.e., could drink not only in reduced quantities but without the associated violence.

Historical trauma

As imposed, rapid social change has been considered an underlying cause of suicide, so are other social ills attributed to it, especially alcohol and thus the other problems that alcohol in turn exacerbates (AFN, 1999; Segal, 1999). Some Native scholars and activists, especially outside Alaska, have stressed not just the fact of the changes or even their pace but the resulting historical trauma for Native people (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995). Innumerable deaths caused by epidemics, the theft of lands and resettlement in other places, the forced relocation of thousands to urban areas, the forced acculturation of children at boarding schools and the abuse too-often perpetrated there – these experiences, which have gone ungrieved and are lodged in the individual and communal psyches of generations of Native people, are now compounded by losses due to suicide, internally-perpetrated abuse, etc. These authors suggests that any attempt at treatment and healing for individuals must acknowledge this group trauma.

In Alaska, Napoleon (1991) and Jordan (1997) have emphasized the trauma caused by epidemics that killed a possible 60% of Yup'iks and other Natives early in the 20th century (see also Fortuine, 1989). The details of Alaska Natives' historical experiences are different from and perhaps less bad than lower 48 tribes';

for example, Alaska Natives have not been removed from their traditional homelands, and subsistence continues. But as discussed, their continued relationship with their lands, and the animals who inhabit them, is threatened; and traditional activities that fostered connections among family and community members have changed, threatening those relationships as well. Accepting the basic premise of unresolved grief due to historical trauma and its contribution to modern social problems seems reasonable, though I think the discussion of Yup'ik Christianity demonstrates that changes have not been uniformly experienced as traumatic.

Services

Paraprofessionals in rural social services

In Alaska, the challenges of rural mental health [and other kinds of service] delivery are often combined with that of cross-cultural work. A rural mental health worker discovers the difficulties of working in settings in which the culture and lifestyle are neither shared nor understood. Local hire is an obvious solution to this difficulty, but lack of higher education has excluded many Alaska natives from clinical positions (Minton & Soule, 1990, p. 8; cf. Rodenhauser, 1994),

state Rural Mental Health managers determined more than a decade ago. Since then, there has been an emphasis in rural Alaska on hiring local, paraprofessional workers and on providing them with additional training. For example, the development of the Rural Human Services (RHS) certificate program offered

through the University of Alaska Fairbanks and its extension campuses (including Bethel's) is a direct outgrowth of the state-sponsored studies of mental health treatment (Susan Soule, personal communication, 5/14/99).

RHS and the emphasis on paraprofessionals in general were intended to build on the emic cultural knowledge and interpersonal networks that community members would already share with clients, in contrast to most professional outsiders. They were also intended to overcome issues of availability, given that itinerant professionals were responsible for multiple communities "scattered across vast areas of wilderness, accessible primarily by air taxi" and were usually elsewhere when crises occurred (Munson, Risley, & Soule, 1989, p. 1). What I think of as "face time," even – perhaps especially – when not spent engaged in service provision per se but rather when engaged with people in informal community contexts, is important for building provider-client relationships (Herring, 1999; C. S. Reimer, 1996; Schacht, Tafoya, & Mirabla, 1989). Itinerants who showed up once in a while for very brief periods simply couldn't establish the regularity and depth of relationship that rural, Native community members indicated they wanted (C. S. Reimer, 1996), let alone overcome historic distrust (Lockart, 1981).

Yet, local service providers have not been unanimously rated as effective (e.g. Ashby, 1989), and there are situations where outsiders are deemed preferable. Some of C.S. Reimer's (1996) Inupiat informants said confidentiality was sometimes at issue with local service providers. She did not elaborate whether

people meant they feared the providers would inappropriately share information or whether the providers were too-close family and thus involved in the situation (or something else). Both seem to me quite plausible reasons for people's reservations. Other researchers have found that local service providers are unacceptable when their family networks are socially at odds with the clients': "It may even be preferable to be treated by a stranger than by nonfamily community members who could potentially have interest in exploiting the [helping] relationship for their own gain" (Miller & Pylypa, 1995, p. 22). Not all community members have truly equal access to services from local providers, they conclude.

Crucially, Alaska Native paraprofessional social service providers themselves have found their jobs challenging. Some on the North Slope "said they quit because of personal problems or because they found it too difficult to cope with the pressures of this [alcohol counseling] position. Criticism of their work, interruptions in the middle of the night, and other community pressures became too much for these young counselors (both paraprofessionals were under age 40) and they quickly burned out" (C. S. Reimer, 1996, p. 274). Rural (on and off the road system), paraprofessional Personal Care Attendants (for Elders and other senior citizens) said they felt isolated and that they wanted mechanisms for face-to-face peer support; they also reported feeling disrespected by both the professionals they worked with and by clients' family members (Branch & Shearer, 2003).

The Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) also found it difficult to negotiate their relationships with clients (Branch & Shearer, 2003). Told by their agencies

not to get involved personally with clients, they all “agreed this was an impossible request” (p. 29) and that help managing those relationships would be more useful. The research report from that study did not say, but I would add that given the size of rural Alaskan villages, the PCAs probably had “dual relationships” – relationships in community contexts outside of work – with most of their clients and their families, and that these may have posed challenges as well. The social work professional code of ethics has discouraged extra-work relationships, taking little notice of how difficult they are to avoid in rural contexts (Miller, 1998). In a recent discussion of social workers and dual relationships, Reamer (2003) distinguished between “boundary violations” and “boundary crossings,” at least not positing that additional connections between service providers and clients must be always problematic; but even he did not acknowledge the unavoidability of them in very small communities.

Services on the YK Delta

Each of the central (Bethel-based) agencies engaged in social service provision in the YK Delta relies heavily on paraprofessionals at the village level, with professional social workers available in the village to varying degrees. Two are Native non-profit organizations mentioned briefly earlier.

The **ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS** (AVCP; see www.avcp.org) addresses most non-health-related social welfare issues (as well as natural resources and some general cultural preservation programs). AVCP is home to the YK Delta’s various income support and employment-promotion

programs including a tribal TANF (welfare) program, employment training opportunities, and child care and energy assistance programs. AVCP also runs tribal child welfare programs, including a family support program and the receiving home used by the state for children who are in custody but not yet placed in foster homes.

Of particular relevance for this study, AVCP employs a professional social worker and a lawyer to address Indian child welfare issues. They provide consultation and training for village-based paraprofessional family services workers commonly known as ICWA Workers, who are formally employed by their tribal governments. In principle, ICWA Workers are the frontline workers for endangered children in the villages, although concurrent jurisdiction and laws that mandate reporting suspected harm to DFYS but not necessarily to the tribe, as well as variation among villages and how they set up their offices, leave the ICWA Workers' role somewhat ambiguous. In addition, ICWA Workers are trained to provide administrative assistance for formalizing customary adoptions.

ICWA Workers are not required to be involved with youth delinquency issues, though their involvement is by no means prohibited. The AVCP ICWA Social Worker has pointed out that ICWA Workers' efforts with troubled youth can function as prevention for their younger siblings since children at risk of harm are likely to come from the same families as youth at risk of trouble with the law (Joan Dewey, personal communication, 10/99/01).

As a “638” agency,⁴⁹ the **YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION** (YKHC; see www.ykhc.org) provides physical health care in the YK Delta, with some additional preventive care provided by the state public health nurses. Health care is organized in ordinal layers of service. The least complicated care, or emergency care, is provided at village clinics by paraprofessional Community Health Aides (CHAs). A few villages have sub-regional clinics, which are staffed by mid-level providers who can treat somewhat more difficult conditions and can prescribe some medications. The hospital in Bethel is staffed by medical care providers with a range of professional- and paraprofessional-level training. Run mostly as an outpatient clinic, the hospital has a maternity ward and a small ward for other inpatient care. Doctors, dentists, and some mid-level providers also travel to assigned villages for a few weeks each year, and they are in phone or internet contact most days with the village-based providers. Patients who require the most challenging (or high-tech) care are likely to go the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, which has a larger physical facility and more specialists on staff.

I have heard of the YKHC hospital contracting with Native “healers,” individuals with abilities perhaps like traditional shamans’ to cure certain physical ailments. Among the Inupiat, Turner (1989) found seven elements common to healing events: a level of perception she called clairvoyance; the help of a spirit

⁴⁹ The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975) – PL 93-638 (thus the descriptor “638”) – “encourages tribes to assume administrative responsibility for federally funded

entity, Jesus in her community; the concept of disease as a thing to be drawn from the body; the awareness of hands as special instruments of healing; “the conversation of bodies” between sufferer and healer; correct positioning of organs; and “healability” or readiness (p. 16). Healers themselves demonstrated a sense of personal well-being (C. S. Reimer, 1996), approximately what the Inuit have called *ihuma*. Notably, people in my fieldwork community sought out healers for some kinds of physical pain, but when I asked if they ever went to local healers when they felt bad in their minds or emotions, they said no.

YKHC also is the host agency for numerous other health-related programs including a variety of health education efforts and behavioral health programs. A recent focus in the behavioral health department has been the People Working Together Project (“Wraparound”), designed to foster children’s mental health. Wraparound employs and coordinates the services of several itinerant professional social workers, most of them based in villages with sub-regional clinics, as well as employed Family Advocates and project Elders.⁵⁰ Paraprofessional Wellness Counselors are the behavioral health analog to the CHAs. As of January, 2003, YKHC employed 24 Wellness Counselors, 11 male and 13 female, of an average age of 43 (Laura Baez, personal communication, 1/25/03). YKHC is the YK Delta

programs that were designed for their benefit and that previously were administered by” the BIA and IHS (*Indian tribes...*, 1988, p. 15).

⁵⁰ This study is not an evaluation of the Wraparound Project, and Unegkumuit was not a community where the Project was most intensively piloted. However, the Project was widely promoted around the region, including among Unegkumuit providers. It is worth noting that the model embraces family involvement and decision-making, at least in principle. The assigned village clinician, the assigned project Elder, and the family advocate lived in three different villages, none in Unegkumuit.

organization that sends the most people through the RHS certificate program, and RHS staff at the Bethel college work closely with YKHC regarding the curriculum.

Professional social workers also serve the YK Delta villages that fall within the **LOWER KUSKOKWIM SCHOOL DISTRICT** (LKSD; www.lksd.org).

Bethel schools have social workers permanently assigned to them, and their job duties probably are most like school social workers' jobs elsewhere. The itinerant social workers, however, tend to be the only professional service providers visiting their assigned sites with any regularity, not only for specific events or emergencies.

I can say from experience that they may get involved in anything connected to children's and family well-being. They tend to work closely with the paraprofessional School Community Advocates employed by most schools; the Advocates' jobs vary from site to site but are centered around creating a bridge between the kuss'aq-dominant school and the local community. To my knowledge no formal evaluation has been conducted, but the LKSD model stands out as unusual in its reliance on professionals but willingness to assign them few enough sites that they can establish a presence in the communities, even as they work closely with on-site paraprofessionals.

The Advisory School Boards (ASBs) also link the local schools to their villages. The "Big Board" sets district-wide policy, but ASBs, comprised of village residents, have discretion over specific issues for their own schools.

Counseling and other modes of healing

Whether the service providers are professional or paraprofessional (and I note the assumption in the literature that professionals will be non-Native despite growing numbers of Natives in social work and other professional degree programs), counseling is an important component of the current service delivery system in rural Alaska. Despite traditional norms discouraging strong emotional expression, naming the losses associated with historical trauma and contemporary violence and expressing the concomitant grief are considered a vital part of healing in Native communities (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Napoleon & commentators, 1991). Individual counseling and even psychotherapy have been found acceptable and useful as interventions for accomplishing this (Duran & Duran, 1995), though others emphasize group work (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). There is consensus that no treatment for identified individuals can be isolated from family and community work (see also Jordan, 1997), and non-Native counselors or service providers have been encouraged to consult or collaborate with traditional providers (Mohatt & Varvin, 1998).

Hild (1987) cautions that “the traditional western tools for dealing with alcohol abuse (and mental health problems)” (p. 88) may be inappropriate for Alaska Native cultures. Although not dismissing outright the possible helpfulness of 1:1 approaches such as counseling, he wants outsiders to avoid imposing foreign problem formulations, as they do when persuading people who abuse alcohol that

they “are alcoholics,” people with a disease. He points to the means of social control in the qasgiq – tolerating poor behavior until the individual matures and self-corrects, teasing, and shunning – and summarizes them as using “shame.” That indirect shaming as a strategy is no longer as effective as it once was, Hild suggests, is no excuse to assume that Natives accept and blithely “enable” people’s drinking, as he accuses many kuss’aq practitioners of assuming. Part of the challenge for treatment planners, he argues, is to help Native people re-invigorate shaming as a cultural practice and effectively apply it to substance abuse.

Spicer (2001) doesn’t use the word shame, but if his work with urban Indians in the Midwest can be transferred, it suggests that exploiting a sense of shame can be integrated into counseling. Spicer’s “problem drinker” informants struggled with their own perception that “alcohol is incompatible with the way of life that is proper to Indian people. In this view, alcohol is seen as a corrupting imposition from the White world and abstinence held up as an ideal for Indian people” (p. 232). As stated earlier, not all Alaska Natives share the view that alcohol abuse and abstinence are the only options (Shinkwin & Pete, 1982); but if most problem drinkers do, then dissonance between their felt identity as Native and their behavior may provide a space for fostering increased sobriety. Their own constructions of their culture and how they uphold it might be used as a motivator.

As a final note on counseling, Alaska Native informants indicated that they rarely sought out counselors (of any level of training or background) “when they felt sad” (Minton & Soule, 1990). Instead, in descending order of frequent responses,

they went to: friends, religion, parents, unspecified others, relatives, miscellaneous, teachers, and Elders, and only then counselors, themselves, and city officials (p. 12).

Much less material is available on community organizing efforts in Alaska Native communities. At least one local organization developed by villagers in the YK Delta to prevent substance abuse and suicide “serve[d] to increase the competency and sense of efficacy of the community as a whole” (McDiarmid, 1983, p. 53) despite lack of evidence that the incidence of the identified issues had decreased (cf. Edwards, Drews, Seaman, & Edwards, 1994).

There may also be local means of promoting well-being that service providers can promote that do not require actually providing services themselves. Eating Native foods can be a means of preventing or informally treating general emotional malaise. Various seal products, for example, have been documented as remedies for a range of physical problems (Borre, 1994), ailments which if left untreated can lead to low spirits or “weakness of the soul” (which was also referred to as depression although I don’t think in a clinical sense). It is not clear if biomedical treatment of the physical illnesses (e.g. ear infection, nausea) was seen to adequately prevent malaise; it is clear that store-bought foods have been considered at best neutral and at worst causal of these ailments.

Finally, Christianity and religion may play a role here. In studies of healing, broadly defined, among the Alaskan Inupiat and Inuit of arctic Quebec, the services and practices of evangelical Christian sects were highlighted for their parallels to shaman-led ceremonials (Fletcher & Kirmayer, 1997; Turner, 1989). In particular,

the emphasis on vigorous emotional expression, performance, and being filled with the spirit (i.e., speaking in tongues) resonated such that some of these practices were borrowed by the more established local churches as well. Where cultural practices traditionally fostered avoiding forceful demonstrations of emotion, and yet activists have called for more expression (Napoleon & commentators, 1991), specific, ritual settings for dramatic emotiveness may well have therapeutic effects.

All of the issues, service systems, and intervention addressed here will become pertinent in the fifth chapter.

Chapter Four: Daily life in Unegkumuit

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature about a variety of issues pertinent to the contemporary Yup'ik. Here, I build on that background knowledge of “the” Yup'ik and draw on my own data to narrow the focus to this particular community, Unegkumuit. The goal of this transitional chapter is to provide a (realist) sense of life in Unegkumuit so that the next chapter's discussion of problematic issues and responses makes sociocultural and geographic sense. The first section describes different aspects of daily life; the second describes social service provision, focusing on the paraprofessional service providers and their work but not on specific cases or incidents. The final section of the chapter details the fieldwork itself, presenting a (confessional) discussion of the experience and the recording of it within postmodern critiques of anthropology and ethnography.

Unegkumuit

Unegkumuit⁵¹ is located on the Bering Sea coast some hundred miles from Bethel and separated from its nearest neighbor by miles of uninhabited and undeveloped tundra. In November, 2001, according to the Tribal Administrator (personal communication), Unegkumuit had a permanent population⁵² of just under

⁵¹ See Meyer (1996) for a fictionalized description of a similar village from the perspective of a schoolboy.

⁵² Teachers, researchers, and others living in the village for short-term, work-related reasons are excluded.

400 living in 65-70 homes. All but two residents were enrolled members of the tribe; one of those two was non-Native. About 100 enrolled tribal members were living elsewhere at the time.⁵³ I do not have employment figures, but the local economy is a mixed one, with wage labor and subsistence both important. The English word “work” seemed mostly to be used for paid jobs, with a few people explicitly contrasting “working men” and “subsistence men.”

Elders could recall living at the old village site several miles away. As they explained to high school students engaged in an oral history project (students, 1993), the community moved because of annual flooding and because the old site was not a good one for building a permanent school. After three years of discussion in the old village *qasgiq*, the men decided to move upriver. Now the old village is a destination for berry picking.

Physical space and amenities

The current village is laid out like many villages, with two residential areas, one of mostly pre-fabricated public-housing units, and one of older buildings made of plywood. The central “downtown” area includes the K-12 school, the clinic, the

⁵³ The fluidity of enrollment in the federally-recognized Native Village of Unegkumuit tribe illustrates the disconnect between identity and legal status, for membership in a specific tribe was a function of current geography and convenience as well as ancestry. Quite a few currently enrolled tribal members had married into the village and had been members of other tribes (villages) until they settled here. The Tribal Administrator explained that newcomers, and parents on behalf of children, had to apply for membership to the Traditional Council; the Council could deny such an application, though in her experience this had never happened. Applicants had to be at least ¼ Native American but not necessarily Yup’ik or Alaska Native. Enrollment status directly affected whether one could vote in local Traditional Council elections and which Council or Tribal Court had jurisdiction in certain matters, including child welfare. The nonchalance with which the Tribal Administrator and the ICWA Worker, and the handful of informants who happened to have been

post office, the village corporation general store, the TV satellite, the church, and the offices of the Traditional Council and City Council, all within a 5-minute walk of each other. Another store and the Head Start program are located a bit further into the older section of the village. To walk from one end of the village to the other can take up to 30 minutes. A new boardwalk serves as the main artery through the community for both pedestrians and those riding all-terrain vehicles (“4-wheelers”). Snowmachines (snowmobiles) are the main form of ground transportation once snow covers the tundra; small boats are used for hunting & fishing and visiting neighboring communities when the waters are clear. The village relies on summer barges to bring non-perishable bulk supplies from outside; other supplies and mail are flown in on the small planes that land on the nearby gravel airstrip 5 or 6 times a day in fair weather (or not for 5 or 6 days running when the weather is “bum”).

Only the school has indoor plumbing; everyone else hauls water from central pump sites adjacent to the boardwalk and hauls their honeybucket waste to the sewage lagoon. Families also haul their trash to the dump. Most homes have small steambath buildings nearby for bathing and socializing, heated by driftwood fires. Most families have phones and televisions (two channels are available without cable), and almost everyone has VHF radios on all the time. While houses are likely to have multiple bedrooms, they are also likely to have many people living in

born elsewhere, spoke of switching enrollment suggested that identity as Yup'ik or Native was distinct from membership in a given village-tribe.

them, so that children regularly sleep on the living room couch for lack of bed space. Walls are crowded with photographs of family members and, often, religious imagery. In my experience, homes are well-heated. Enclosed entryways not only reduce the escape of heat from the houses but serve as additional refrigerators for recently harvested meat. Freshly slaughtered seal, newly shot ptarmigan, and a bucketful of live blackfish are common on these porches.

Teachers are offered housing by the school district, most of which is located very close to the school, with some units in the old BIA school (which have running water). The fall of the fieldwork, Native teachers in Unegkumuit chose to live in community housing, but they were eligible for teacher housing and some in other communities did choose it.

Relationships within the community

Individuals in Unegkumuit are related to each other in myriad ways. That adoptive, namesake, and other traditional kinds of relationships are still important was illustrated by one young woman's comment about an Elder who was dying: the dying woman was her grandmother's sister and therefore her grandmother as well "in our way" – which affected her obligations around helping with preparations. Also, adopted children refer to their parents and their "real" (birth) parents without apparent self-consciousness, clearly as aware of biological connections as of who provides day-to-day caretaking.

Community members regularly "visit" each other. People enter each others' homes without knocking, or sometimes knocking but not waiting for any

acknowledgement from inside before entering. Coffee, tea, and small snacks are routinely offered, and people will talk or just sit companionably. Women who are processing subsistence foods when guests (neighbors, family members) arrive continue; the guests might help. Departures are not marked; people just leave. Children are regularly in and out of their relatives' homes as well.

Visiting the kuss'aq teachers is a special privilege for the kids; the teachers often want some time off from their students and so limit access to their homes. Adults in the community do not visit the kuss'aq teachers, for the most part, and the teachers rarely integrate into the community enough for social visiting (as opposed to occasional, more formal and purposive "home visits"). The fall of the fieldwork, the kuss'aq teachers seemed to me to consist of an unusually self-contained group of people; they did not socialize much among themselves either.

While I was in the village, the Traditional Council, the City Council, and the Advisory School Board (ASB) all met monthly. I do not know how specific responsibilities were distributed between the Traditional Council (TC) and the City, but the TC was the body most people referred to when talking of local government. The president elected that fall was a younger man though most TC members looked to be in late middle-age. The president had worked for the TC but had to give up his job when elected to the Council.

Community events and activities

When the Elder lady died, her home was full of people bringing food and visiting the family. She was laid on the floor in a traditional fur parka and *mukluks*

(boots). There was standing room only in the church for her funeral, and the subsequent potluck had to be held in the school gym (the largest space in the village). There was a smaller crowd for the feast commemorating the recent death of another Elder; that was held in the community hall portion of the Traditional Council building. In both cases, food was spread on long folding tables, with people serving themselves: Elders first, followed by adults, teens, and children. *Agutaq* ("Eskimo ice cream"), meat and fish, and spaghetti were in greatest supply.

At usual Sunday church services, there is room for everyone to sit, though the church is usually full. This Catholic village is served by an itinerant kuss'aq priest. Responsible for three villages, typically he stays in each for about ten days, saying Sunday and daily Mass, conferring other sacraments, and overseeing the administration of the parish. Two ordained Yup'ik deacons assist the priest when he is in town and lead services themselves when he is not. A parish council assists the Parish Administrator, a local woman, with day-to-day affairs. All services are bilingual, with different components conventionally conducted in Yup'ik or English but rarely both.

It was only about 5am when the terrorist attacks of 9/11 occurred. Most people woke up to the re-plays on the news. The village seemed quieter that day, not only as people reflected on the events but because there were no planes. The children's response to the attacks, I think, speaks to their relationship with "that world like TV." Either they did not realize that *these* images of buildings exploding and burning were real, since that's exactly what so many tall buildings do on TV

and videos, and they'd never seen buildings like them in real life; or they focused on the intentionality of the planes being flown into the buildings and feared the mail planes would fly into their homes. I think I was the only person in the village who had strong personal connections with either New York or Washington, DC, though some other people had visited one or the other city.

A community mourning service held a few days after 9/11 took place in the school gym. From my fieldnotes:

Touching. We said the pledge of allegiance, the head guy at the National Guard spoke (most villages have their own small armory), we said the Our Father prayer, and we heard a Bible passage, all in both languages. The kids sang some hymns, and the deacons, local men, went around with an offering of burning tundra grass as incense, as a cleansing ritual. Or, it would have been both local deacons. The priest ended up taking over for one whose day job is school maintenance man; in the middle of the service, the fire marshal flew in (the planes just started flying again), and he had to make the rounds with her as she inspected the safety measures. She asked with a combination of curiosity and warning if the school always burned things in the gym?

Besides the gym being the best space for large community events, that fall, the school was a central gathering place for the community. It is by far the largest local employer, with over two dozen local people holding permanent full-time or

part-time jobs, including two certified teachers,⁵⁴ and others working temporary contracts as, for example, substitutes and Cultural Week consultants. (Cultural Week is the school's practice of putting away the books for a week and inviting Elders and others into the classroom to focus on traditional skills and stories.) In addition, other community members stopped by the school throughout the day – to check on their kids, to meet with teachers or staff, to catch up on news in the lobby by chatting with others or reading the paper. The school purchased several copies of the Anchorage newspaper which, when the planes could fly, were delivered only a day late; after 9/11, even more people came to read the paper. The frequent visitors heightened the sense that the school was full to bursting with many more children than it had been designed for.

During evening hours, too, the school is a locus of activity. Most students whose grades and attendance make them eligible, participate in school sports, most notably basketball and Native Youth Olympics (NYO; skilled activities which mirror hunting skills and/or contests from traditional ceremonies). There is voluntary evening study hall for high school students who find studying at home difficult. And on different nights of the week, open gym draws high school students, adult men, and adult women to play hours of basketball (as in Condon's research site, described in the last chapter). A curfew mandates that elementary

⁵⁴ I counted eight kuss'aq certified teachers and administrators who lived in the village during the school year, with itinerant specialists visiting from the central office periodically.

school-aged children be home by 9 pm during the week and 10 pm on weekends and that secondary school-aged kids be home by 10 and 11 pm.

Games requiring less exertion are popular too. School children are proficient at many board games. And many adults participate in the bingo games sponsored by the Traditional Council and the City Council. Each Council building has a large hall with a numbers board on one wall and folding tables and chairs. The Councils sponsor “rippies” as well, tickets purchased for a dollar or two which occasionally yield a financial prize. I accompanied one woman and watched as she immediately won \$100 and then spent it buying more tickets. Playing cards in people’s homes is another popular evening (all night) activity.

Language use

More children in Unegkumuit speak Yup’ik than in many communities (a Class A village per Krauss, 1998), but adults still observe that young people speak less Yup’ik than the generations before. Everyone but the oldest Elders speaks English, either standard English or village English. The school has a simultaneous translation unit for English-dominant ASB meetings to facilitate Elder participation. Translation at other community events, Mass and Council meetings for example, is sketchier; but then, the participation of non-Yup’ik-speakers is much less frequent.

The Yup’ik spoken in institutional contexts is liberally interspersed with English phrases; it was relatively easy for me as a monolingual English speaker to follow the topic of conversation, if not to understand what was being said about it. I commented on this, and several people said with some ambivalence that they found

themselves using English “shortcuts” when English had “easier” words; “table,” for example, apparently is easier to say than its Yup’ik equivalent. Items that were introduced by outsiders, especially electronics, are routinely referred to by their English names (e.g. TV, computer) even when Yup’ik words have been invented for them. Uniformly, English is the language of writing except in the classroom during Yup’ik-language instruction.

In the context of this study, it is interesting that feelings are likely to be described in English. English has a broader emotional vocabulary, several people said after some deliberation, when I asked about it. English distinguishes among types and degrees of sadness, for example. In addition, feelings are the topic of discourse more often among kuss’aq̄s than Yup’iks, so that they “got used to using English.” This topic is not something I pursued systematically, but that verbally acknowledging feelings warrants codeswitching reinforces the traditional orientation toward emotional restraint.

Village social services: people and patterns

As is fairly typical of the region and school district, Unegkumuit is served by a dizzying array of agencies and service providers (see Figure 2).⁵⁵ Not every one is charged with a social services mandate, but all are involved in service provision to some extent. Reading vertically, the chart is organized into layers of agencies and positions serving the entire region and then the village. Reading across, there are

⁵⁵ When I consulted the local service providers about the accuracy of my chart, they added some people and entities with whom they collaborated at times, which are reflected here. Even so, they

five relevant agencies or clusters of agencies. I described most agencies in the last chapter. To recap: the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) employs not only on-site and itinerant teachers, administrators, and teacher aides, but also itinerant school social workers and on-site School-Community Advocates. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) has Wellness Counselors placed in most communities and village-based, itinerant behavioral health clinicians employed through the Wraparound project, as well as a variety of village-based and itinerant physical health care providers. The village Traditional Council formally employs the ICWA Workers (Indian Child Welfare family services workers) and the Village Police Officers (VPOs), but ICWA Workers work closely also with family services staff at the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and the VPOs may work closely with state troopers under some circumstances. (Some villages also have Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs), who are employed and trained by the state and work more closely with the troopers.) At times the ICWA Worker consults with DFYS; the Wellness Counselor is in contact with representatives of any number of YKHC programs when there is need. At the time of the research, Unegkumuit was in the process of forming a Tribal Court and a Child Protection Team, both also with the help of AVCP.

Table 3 provides some demographic data about the service providers who were active in Unegkumuit during the fieldwork period. The absence of women

were hesitant to endorse anything in writing that had not been approved by their supervisors. Thus, I emphasize that this figure reflects my understanding of service provision; any errors are mine.

Bethel	LKSD -Superintendent -Asst. Supt. for Student Services -Lead Social Worker -School Safety Officer	DFYS	AVCP -ICWA Social Worker -ICWA lawyer -sovereignty lawyer	YKHC Behavioral Health: -field office -RDT } short-term -CRC } psychiatric -Malone Home -Village Clinician -Family Advocate -Wraparound Elder -Phillips Alcohol Treatment Ctr -Inhalants Treatment Ctr	Criminal Justice state troopers state courts probation Youth Facility Group Home adult prison
Unegkumuit	School Social Worker school: Site Administrator Faculty (certified) Staff (classified)		Traditional Council Tribal Court (being formed)		
	School-Community Advocate		ICWA Worker	Wellness Counselor	VPOs (VPSOs)
			Child Protection Team (being formed)		
				Other Bethel Agencies: Tundra Women's Coalition (domestic violence, sexual assault) Bethel Alternative Boarding School (LKSD; own admissions) Bethel Community Services (e.g., developmental disabilities)	
	Outside the Delta: API, Charter North Star (state psychiatric) substance abuse treatment centers other schools, Ft. Richardson military school				

Figure 2 Agencies and positions serving Unegkumuit during the fall, 2001

Table 3 Cast of characters: service providers

job title	Name (pseudonym)	race/ethnicity	gender	approximate age	highest level of education
Wellness Counselor	Jerry	Native	Male	Late 30s	1 yr college; RHS certified
School-Community Advocate	Carol	Native	Female	Early 40s	Some college
ICWA Worker	Ethan	Native	Male	Early 40s	High school
Traditional Council President	Olaf	Native	Male	Early 30s	High school
School Social Worker	Jeff	Kuss'aq	Male	Mid 20s	MSW
School Site Administrator	Jack	Kuss'aq	Male	Early 60s	Master's degree
Village Clinician	Terence	Kuss'aq	Male	Late 30s	MSW
Village Police Officers	misc.	Native	Male	20s-50s	at least high school
Alaska State Troopers	misc.	Kuss'aq	Male	typically 40s	at least BA

Note: The term "kuss'aq" is here to mean non-Native; not all the kuss'aqs serving Unegkumuit were white, but to identify the people of color more exactly would make them identifiable.

was striking; Carol, the School-Community Advocate, was the lone female.

Consistent with the traditional separation of the sexes, she worked more often with girls than boys at the school, and the male providers were more attuned to the needs of men and boys (which is not to say they disdained the needs of females when pushed). That a woman was available as a formal helper only at the school – i.e., there were no trained women for women in the community to consult with – may have been important in how issues were defined and addressed. Because of the paucity of formal women helpers in Unegkumuit at this time, I cannot focus on gender issues in the next chapter.

It was convenient for Jerry and Ethan that they held the Wellness Counselor and ICWA Worker positions, for whereas Carol was expected to keep regular hours at the school, the men had somewhat more flexible work schedules. All three of the

local service providers were committed to subsistence activities, but it was easier for Carol to manage her women's tasks around her school hours. Jerry worked a four-day week and often went away for the long weekend to hunt. Ethan had the most flexibility and in fine weather was more likely to be working on his new house or away hunting than in his office. None worked full-time; they averaged 20 hours per week and were paid on an hourly rather than salaried basis, though both men could be called for emergencies at any time. Working for the school, Carol had summers off, which was important as her summer subsistence and childcare tasks required full-time attention. The two men did not have the summers off outright, but it was understood that both would be away fishing for weeks at a time.

All three of the paraprofessionals applied for their positions less because *these* jobs were initially so appealing than because they wanted paid work in a community where any jobs are scarce. Carol had some previous experience working in social services in Bethel and was the most interested in such work when she got her current job; however, the job itself was less oriented toward helping when she started. Both Ethan and Jerry were new to social services and said they applied for their positions because the jobs were open at the time – though both were quick to add that they liked that they were helping people. Jerry, in particular, asked questions about the education required for professional social work degrees and hinted that he might pursue one when his children were older. (All three had numerous children ranging from pre-school to high school-aged.)

School-Community Advocate (SCA)

Carol's position, which she had held for over ten years, was originally titled Home-School Coordinator. When she started the job, it was mostly about attendance and going to students' homes to make sure they came to school that day – very different work from what she had been doing in prevention in her previous social services position. The job title had changed a few years earlier (after my tenure as school social worker) because teachers in the school district misunderstood the name and thought Home-School Coordinators were tutors for home-schooled or suspended students, she explained.

Now Carol described her work self as “sort of like a social worker, but I’m not;” she was a “communicator between school and parents.” She worked closely with the school social worker, Jeff, an itinerant who came to the village for two or three days approximately every two weeks. Carol was Jeff’s initial point of contact, filling him in on students’ behavioral and emotional status and letting him know which students/families most warranted his limited time. Carol also worked directly with students, particularly girls and younger students whose English was more limited, but sometimes also with older boys when Jeff was not on site. Jeff denied “supervising” her per se, but they did “consult,” and he guided her through some of the more intense situations that he as the professional might have handled if he had been located in the village full-time. She also functioned as his “cultural guide” (Green, 1999; Leigh, 1998) and helped him negotiate the local culture. “Every time

I get stuck, I make sure to ask her if I'm doing the right thing, and she at least nods her head 'yes' or shakes her head 'no.'”

Carol's direct supervision came from Jack, the school principal, who was serving his sixth year in Unegkumuit. (In contrast, the teachers this year were all new this or the preceding year.) They regularly conferred about students of concern and agreed which ones Carol should direct Jeff to work with. The regular school secretary being ill and requiring assistance this particular year, Carol also worked closely with Jack on some administrative issues – still including attendance. Her office work filled in her “on-call” time, the time she was available but not immediately needed. Some days she did nothing but paperwork for the school, unrelated to her SCA position. Other days she was called to the classroom to comfort a disruptive child, or she served as a cultural as well as linguistic translator during parent-teacher meetings, or she went to students' homes to consult with family members about concerns. She talked to students individually, especially older girls, though the lack of space in the school made finding the privacy to do this rather haphazard. Carol had been the adviser for the Natural Helpers program, but it was inactive during the fieldwork period. When I asked community members for their understandings of her job, most were rather uncertain, but young adult women consistently identified her as “someone to talk to.”

Carol attended annual training in Bethel with other School Community Advocates and the school social workers. Topics varied; generic counseling skills were emphasized periodically. This year, the SCAs attended the training about

YKHC's Wraparound program with other professionals and paraprofessionals from around the region.

Wellness Counselor

Jerry's title also had recently changed, and in his case, the name change indicated an expansion of responsibilities. He had been hired as a Village Alcohol Education Counselor (VAEC) about six years before and had been trained to support sobriety among community members. (Although Unegkumuit was a local option village and was nominally dry, bootleggers continued to import alcohol.) Jerry could interview potential clients as part of assessing them for treatment, although he did not make treatment decisions, and he hosted AA meetings as part of "aftercare" for those who had been through treatment elsewhere. When YKHC reorganized its substance abuse and mental health programs into one behavioral health department, the VAEC position was expanded to include mental health and crisis (i.e., suicide) intervention and renamed. Now, with Wraparound, the Wellness Counselors were also the liaisons between the villages and the YKHC clinicians.

Jerry admitted freely that he felt more confident dealing with substance abuse issues, in part because training around mental health issues had not caught up to substance abuse. (YKHC was working on the gap, for example, by sending Jerry and some colleagues to a rural mental health conference during the fieldwork period.) His initial training focused on counseling and support, and he was a part of the first cohort of Rural Human Services students at the college in Bethel. That

education, he said, had consisted largely of self-disclosure and personal healing, a kind of learning he felt comfortable with, and which resonates with a traditional disinclination to make or hear general statements beyond direct experience. He was “quietly proud,” as I characterized his statements in my fieldnotes, that his cohort had organized the first regional conference on inhalant abuse as part of their group practicum, and that their efforts had led to the founding of the only dedicated inhalant-abuse treatment center in the state (cf. Wolffe, 2001).

Jerry applied for a job as power plant operator at the same time he applied for the VAEC job; he was offered the latter. I inscribed an early interview: “‘When I got this job I didn’t know what I was getting into....I didn’t know if I wanted to be a counselor.’ He felt reassured later when Elders said everyone has a purpose in life and he was doing what he was supposed to be doing. ‘That encouraged me.’”

Debriefing with his RHS peers and his supervisor at the YKHC office was important to Jerry not only for direction with specific cases but for his own equilibrium. He took his job very personally and said he often thought about it at home. Having some counseling training obligated him to intervene in a way that being a community member did not. “As a community member it’s a choice, I think, it’s up to you to make things happen or just stay back...where[as] people expect you, if you have a job, to do a job....Problems like suicide or substance abuse, I’m trained in those fields and that’s why I think I’m required as a counselor to intervene or do prevention.” He seemed uncertain at times how to manage that obligation, since it assumed cooperation from the putative clients. That often they didn’t

cooperate left him frustrated and questioning himself. On the one hand he was taught to let clients contact him and took care not to pressure people (a theme which will re-emerge in the next chapter); on the other, he was inclined to do more outreach to clients. Historically, most of his official clients came from the court system and probation “because they have leverage with a bench warrant.”

Jerry was committed to prevention and this year was trying to collaborate more with the school and the Traditional Council and ICWA Worker. Energies were better devoted to helping young people avoid problems – alcohol in particular – than in helping them make the difficult choices and changes required to overcome addiction, he reasoned. He was attempting to maintain more of an informal presence in the school, for example by helping out in the shop class when he could, to help the boys feel more comfortable with him, and to promote discussion among faculty and staff. He found it frustrating that emergencies made it necessary to postpone prevention work. ““You make progress on one thing then something else cuts it off.”” Ironically, his official job description was framed almost exclusively in terms of work with individual adults, and the behavioral health system of which he was a part was predicated on Medicaid funding and individual diagnoses.

ICWA Worker

Ethan had worked with ICWA for about two years. During the fieldwork period, his work mostly consisted of legal/administrative assistance for families adopting children via “customary” mechanisms who wanted state recognition. Ethan helped families with the paperwork and walked the Traditional Council

through the required procedures approving the transfer of legal parenthood. Ethan was also providing administrative support to a woman enrolled in the Unegkumuit tribe who was involved in a custody dispute with the child's non-Native father, though since the woman and child lived outside the village, Ethan wondered if he should recommend she enroll the child in her local tribe so it could apply for jurisdiction.

Ethan also worked with child protection, although to my knowledge there were no reports of abuse and neglect made while I was in the village. It was in this context that the phrases "sovereignty" and "self-determination" were used most often. In conjunction with regional tribal agencies such as AVCP, the state was beginning to implement "concurrent jurisdiction," including alerting individual tribes when reports concerning their members had been made to child protective services (DFYS). "Low level" neglect cases were likely to be referred directly to ICWA Workers, Ethan explained. For example, there had been cases in which unsupervised children whose parents were absent from the village were referred to Ethan, and he identified other relatives as officially responsible for them until the parents returned. There had also been occasions in the past when he had accompanied visiting DFYS workers to homes to investigate reports.

Ethan seemed satisfied with how current child protection cases were being addressed. DFYS generally retained decision-making authority regarding whether a child could stay in the home, but if the state of Alaska, or any state, took custody of children enrolled in the Unegkumuit tribe, he received notice and could petition that

jurisdiction be transferred to the Traditional Council as the acting Tribal Court. In fact, only two Unegkumuit children were legal dependents, and they were placed with relatives in other communities. I could not ask a lot of questions about these particular children, but I got the impression that they had been placed by the state before Ethan became the ICWA Worker, and that there had been no children removed from their parents involuntarily in his experience and so no occasion for him to apply for a transfer of jurisdiction. Certainly he had never worked on a case that required legal permanency planning or termination of parental rights. There were no licensed foster homes in the village at this time. (The ICWA Social Worker at AVCP said separately that she and others were working on getting the state to recognize customary adoptions as a permanency option for dependent Native children.)

Ethan was in a rather awkward position insofar as he was employed by and answerable to the Traditional Council, yet he knew more about ICWA and his job than any Council member. As part of applying for approval for a customary adoption at a Council meeting I attended, for example, Ethan had to explain the procedures and requirements; the mostly Yup'ik dialogue was laced with English phrases and names such as "Bureau of Vital Statistics," "court," and "adoption." Ethan reported some consensus that a separate training was needed for the Council members, but turnover and getting people to commit to a time seemed to be barriers. Meanwhile, he turned for consultation to the AVCP ICWA Social Worker and to a lesser extent the ICWA lawyer.

I wonder if Ethan would have intervened directly with parents at risk of losing their children. Although he envisioned the nascent Child Protection Team, a body of community members empowered to act on behalf of the Traditional Council in matters of child welfare (discussed at more length in the next chapter), as providing family counseling, he seemed to see his own role as limited to case management: “I mostly do follow-ups on these [reported] incidents, see what’s happening to the kid.” He made referrals and tracked whether families pursued the services he recommended or DFYS mandated. Indeed, he distinguished his job from the Wellness Counselor by saying that he could make referrals to the Wellness Counselor if the parental drinking threatened child safety but wouldn’t provide counseling himself.

A potential third component of the ICWA Worker position involved working as a tribal liaison in situations involving youth delinquency. Such work was permitted but not mandated, said the ICWA Social Worker, but though called at times about youth behavior, Ethan encouraged community members to go directly to VPOs. “My role is to reunite families” separated by the state because of child abuse, he said, not to address teens in trouble. Nonetheless, he was very concerned about truancy and wanted the Traditional Council to be included in the process by which the school formally/legally informed parents of excessive absences.

The three paraprofessionals collaborated in some ways. They spoke fairly frequently to share concerns and together had planned two community “conferences” in recent years. Jerry compared collaboration to the teamwork of

basketball: “even Michael Jordan couldn’t win against a team of five all by himself.” Jerry and Ethan also worked with Jeff, the school social worker, as part of their increasing involvement with the school overall. Some of these efforts will be discussed in the following chapter.

Challenges for the paraprofessionals

There are two kinds of challenges that warrant brief remark because they provide useful context for the next chapter.

First, like the paraprofessionals mentioned in the literature review, all three local service providers indicated that managing their client/community relationships created difficulties at times. For Jerry and Ethan, mentally separating their clients from their friends and neighbors was tough. “It’s hard being in such a small community and knowing people so well,” Jerry said at one point. During VAEC training at a residential treatment center, Jerry said, he “didn’t mind hearing those clients’ problems because he didn’t know them.” Likewise, Ethan said, “My heart is broken when something bad happens to a community member and could possibly be neglect or something serious could affect a kid mentally.” Each indicated that the stress he took home with him from the office was heightened because he already knew the people involved.

Carol seemed to compartmentalize more and did not indicate feeling weighed down by knowing her neighbors’ problems. She did, however, admit to past fear of a known batterer whose wife had just left the village when he was hanging around hoping to pick up conversations indicating where she’d gone. “It

was scary working up here” at the school and seeing him on the boardwalk, wondering if he would target her as someone who’d helped his wife and thus threaten her. In such a small place, there was no way to avoid him, though she did take some safety precautions.

Ethan, as the person who sometimes worked with DFYS as “the eyes and ears of them,” also struggled with “feel[ing] like I’m losing friends.” His certainty that the work was important could not entirely mitigate his experience of people’s fear and resentment that he assisted the people who could remove children from the community. (That his job was to inject more tribal control into the child welfare system seemed lost on everyone I spoke with except those who worked with him in social services or the Council office.)

The second challenge consisted of negotiating the particular bureaucracies in which the providers were embedded and seemed to be more of an issue for Jerry and Ethan than for Carol. Carol was the most integrated into a specific institution, and this informed her work-related identity in ways quite different from Jerry’s and Ethan’s. When Carol said “we” at work, she was as likely to be aligning herself with the school as with the community (a matter of emphasis rather than opposition, of course). Her supervisor, Jack, was available on-site, as was Jeff on a regular basis. She could confer with them in person and was required to do little paperwork as SCA (she did quite a bit helping the secretary). Moreover, although her SCA job was different than, for example, a teacher aide’s, she was surrounded by other local people employed by the same agency at approximately the same level of

responsibility. And she had held this job for many years. Institutionally, Carol seemed comfortable with her job and her role in the school.

In contrast, Jerry and Ethan were the sole representatives in the village of their respective programs. YKHC and the Traditional Council/ACVP employed others in Unegkumuit, but no one else was doing comparable work on comparable issues. And although community members knew something about their employing agencies, their specific programs were not well understood. Whereas Carol could be placed in the school, even if people were unclear about her job, Ethan and Jerry could not be institutionally located as easily. Furthermore, both men had to call Bethel for consultation and debriefing and saw their supervisors rarely. In sum, they were isolated. Their references to “we” had to situate them with the community rather than with their agencies.

In addition, Ethan and Jerry had a great deal of elaborate paperwork to contend with. Ethan helped people fill out legal documents, as in adoptions, and his child protection reports could have been used in state or tribal court. Jerry was responsible for complicated assessment forms which clinicians in Bethel would use to make treatment recommendations. Both communicated with their colleagues largely via paper. Although both had been trained on their particular forms, both seemed to have significant gaps in their understandings of the big pictures those forms were part of. As a result, the overall systems seemed arbitrary and so they both leaned on the paperwork as concrete guidance for what to do and what to say with little ease with the spirit vs. the letter of the law (the policy vs. the form).

The local service providers' specific work activities are illustrated in more detail in the next chapter.

Methods: Fieldwork in Unegkumuit

The fieldwork experience inherent to ethnography allowed me to get a sense of how specific "cases"⁵⁶ evolved and to be able to conduct ongoing, open-ended interviews, with questions grounded in those cases and in other current events. It allowed me to learn not just what people were willing to share about their thinking but also to observe what they did, both formally and informally. Yet, conducting fieldwork (the process of ethnography) is no more politically innocent than writing (the product). Here I present the messiness of fieldwork such that readers have a clearer sense of how the "realist" knowledge presented has been constructed.

Building on pre-existing relationships

Because of my history with the community, I had the advantage of having already established rapport⁵⁷ and trust with many members of the community. As an itinerant social worker, mine had always been a temporary presence in the village, mere days at a time. Yet, not only had I continued to serve the village over

⁵⁶ I intentionally use the term "case" despite its distancing, hierarchical connotations. The word neatly captures that there is both social work and research significance to these situations which were unfolding in time. In social work usage, a case refers not only to the client system (individual, family, small group, community) but to the environment in which that client system functions; in research usage, the case is the unit of analysis. In both social work practice and research, drawing meaningful yet practical boundaries around the case is a key logical challenge (Meyer, 1993; Ragin & Becker, 1992). Within this community-level case study, I expected to be able (and was able, as will become clear in chapter 5) to identify clinically-meaningful cases within the paraprofessionals' work that would also be meaningful analytically.

⁵⁷ Although "rapport" has been critiqued (e.g., Marcus, 1998, ch.4, suggests "complicity" as a more accurate construct), for me, its importance for engagement with potential research participants

some years – not something to be taken for granted among itinerants of any ethnic background – but I had visited the region and the village in the years since moving away. I had put in my own face time, which was as important for research purposes as for clinical purposes. That I was back again, and for an extended period, was seen by many as itself an indication of my commitment to the community and the area.

It was personally gratifying to reconnect with people. More pertinent to the study, my previous relationships with people influenced their (and their network members') decisions to participate in the project. People simply were more willing to talk to someone familiar than they might have been to a stranger. Furthermore, I suspect people were willing to talk with me also because they knew that I had accumulated tacit knowledge of the region and the service systems, that I understood how things worked. People could expect to tell their stories without having to insert too many tiresome explanatory sidenotes. (I think this was a fair expectation. While systems had not been static since I had left, they had not changed greatly, and so I could follow accounts of “having done this, talked to that person, been referred over here, and ended up like this.” I asked clarifying questions when necessary, but my professional experience in the area did help me understand what I was hearing and observing.) Finally, it was crucial to the data collection that I had already demonstrated that I could and would maintain

remains unassailed. The researcher-participant (and social worker-client) relationship cannot not be power-laden, but without a genuine attempt at empathy, any mutual understanding is impossible.

confidentiality. Unlike research about general social structure or subsistence, my topic required my having access to intimate information about people's lives. My interest was not people's problems per se, but I needed to know about those problems to understand the responses to them.

My previous relationships with people also created complexities. De Laine (2000) rightly expands the ethical/moral dimension of fieldwork beyond adhering to the IRB's limited protections. She argues that the researcher's moral self must be activated throughout the process, and that part of the challenge for the researcher is coming to terms personally with the ambiguities that cannot be neatly resolved by rules and protocols (cf. Wheatley, 1994). What muddied my situation was that while researchers often will give back to the community via personal expertise (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), it was exactly my area of expertise that I was studying and hoped to keep separate.

I was as clear as I could be with people that I was there now as a researcher, not as a practicing social worker, but there were times when people wanted to unofficially "consult." I referred them to other providers, but I felt like I was being stingy. They knew I could (had the knowledge to) offer assistance, and refusing to do so made relationships feel too one-sided. Nonetheless, I wanted to insure as much as possible that what people told me, they told me knowing that I wanted to use their stories to help in the big picture, I was not trying to help in the immediate sense. Clinical consultation would have blurred an already fine distinction. Also, the IRB had expressed concern about exactly this dual role, and I had promised to

refer people who approached me as “clients” to others. (In one case, I was able later to ask an individual who “didn’t want me to get involved but just wanted to consult” what she thought about the distinction.)

There were instances when I did get involved as a social worker. For example, many people were shaken by events on 9/11. A few days before the community mourning service, the school principal asked me to facilitate a group for the school staff. I knew the local providers had no groupwork training, and Jeff, the current school social worker, though present, was newly graduated and said he didn’t feel he could handle it. Since the planes were grounded, no other resources could come, and I judged that such a debriefing opportunity would be valuable for everyone. I agreed to the request.

Several people commented after interviews that it felt good to be able to reflect on their situations, distinct from focusing on getting help (cf. Oakley, 1981). All three of the service providers said near the end of my fieldwork that they appreciated my “letting” them think about their jobs in a different way. I find these reactions unsurprising. My agenda was research, and I reminded people of that. But we know that extended interviews can be therapeutic and can raise consciousness, as well as elicit information. Feminists have written about using research interviews for this purpose (Stacey, 1988), and there are social work practice classes on ethnographic interviewing intended to accomplish just this. I do not see ethical dilemmas here, but these reactions to interviews reinforce our need to be clear that we researchers cannot stand outside of what we study.

More troubling situations were those where in my clinical judgement, others' responses to cases were inadequate. There were times when in interviews about cases, after I thought I had learned what I could about people's own thinking, it seemed there were gaps important enough that I framed questions in a way that intentionally suggested new ideas. For example, I observed a team meeting about one potentially dangerous youth. Later in the week, everyone connected to social services, including myself, was going to a training in the main town, Bethel, and no one seemed concerned about the absence of helpers should his behavior become acute. When debriefing the meeting with someone later, I felt compelled to ask about a safety plan. My informant had no plan then but left our interview thinking about one. In these situations, I may well have changed the course of events. Had the youth in the example become violent that weekend, things would have turned out differently because of the safety plan.

I cannot frame these situations as ethical dilemmas. Then and since, it was clear to me that the stakes were too high not to engage, though I did so as indirectly as I could. I thought I had a clear mandate as a social worker to intervene. Arguably, I acted unethically as a researcher insofar as I affected the phenomena under study, but given the circumstances, there was no hard choice to make. Furthermore, these situations were useful for the research in that they provided me with some intuitive understanding of hybridity as a concept. I was not acting as a social worker instead of a researcher, but fusing the roles; I was reflexively

participating in the very fuzziness that, I will argue below, characterizes social service provision in the village.

Day-to-day life in Unegkumuit and Participant/Observation

The participant-observation continuum is helpful for thinking about researchers' position as "marginal members" of a community: *how* marginal? The phrase participant-observation "captures the ambivalence of distance and familiarity" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998, p. 127). Recently cultures have been recognized as fluid and overlapping rather than static and bounded. The easy power of the (white) ethnographer has been condemned; the researcher is likely to be a member of the group being studied. Thus, the language of ethnography has shifted to "dialogue" and "friendship" (DeLaine, 2000) and "observation of participation" (Tedlock, 2000).

I am uneasy with the shift. First, ethnographers still must negotiate distance/difference and familiarity in their relationships with informants. Realizing that there is no facile insider/outsider dichotomy and that we must negotiate multiple axes, rather than just one, does not make distance and familiarity less relevant. Second, friendship and equality are pretty words, but they obscure the power that remains inherent to the researcher-participant interaction. We can reduce the differential; we cannot eliminate it (Stacey, 1988). Likewise, rhetoric around engagement in stark contrast to objective aloofness (being with vs. looking at) clouds the necessity of detachment, usefully defined by Geertz as the combination of "two fundamental orientations toward reality – the engaged and the

analytic – into a single attitude. It is this attitude, not moral blankness, which we” must call on (quoted in Marcus, 1998, p. 111). It was this attitude I aspired to.

The Tribal Administrator at the Traditional Council office had suggested I wait to find housing until I arrived in the village. The school principal this year, Jack, was the same man as had been there my last year as school social worker. He had invited me to stay with him for a few days while I made other arrangements. Although I had hoped to stay with a family, I was quickly reminded that few families had extra space and that almost every household included several children. Unsure I could manage emotionally if “my” space were limited to a corner of the living room, and quite sure that my ability to write notes would be compromised if I had no reliable quiet time⁵⁸, I decided to take advantage of Jack’s offer of an unused teacher-housing rental unit. A few days after I arrived in the village, I moved into my own remodeled shipping container. It was furnished and had an electric toilet, stove, and heater. I borrowed kitchen ware and, as a tenant of the school, was given keys to the school for showers and collecting water to haul home. The school also allowed me computer lab (internet and email) privileges. (I made a donation to the student council’s prom fund by way of thanks for the computer access.)

In a typical week, I spent some time at the school doing the “hanging out” part of participant observation, sitting with whomever was there at the moment. Some people talked directly to me, some to each other as I sat there. I met people

⁵⁸ See Briggs (1970) as an example of how one anthropologist handled her own need for privacy in the field.

whom I later invited to participate in formal interviews, and I picked up on local issues and events of concern. I became a familiar presence again.

I was present in the community also by participating in local events. Catholic myself in this Catholic village, I attended Mass and communion services regularly, usually the only kuss'aq in the church besides the itinerant priest. I was tapped to help with the high school catechism class. I was going to act as an additional chaperone for the high school girls' Cultural Week trip to the old village site, but the weather was never favorable enough for the boat trip that week. I attended a funeral and community feasts held in honor of deceased Elders. I also visited people socially and was visited, and I took steambaths with other women. It is worth commenting, I think, that this level of community involvement provides me some experiential insight into the "strategic essentialism" concept. I experienced my motives for going to church, for example, as being personally, not professionally, derived. I wanted to go to church for its own sake, my own sake. Yet, I was aware then as now that it helped my cause to be seen doing something that was locally endorsed. What felt personally "natural" and "authentic" had positive, instrumental effects. Would I have engaged in activities if I wanted to but thought people might then disapprove and decline to interact with me? I doubt it. Impression management (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, drawing on Goffman) was still a priority.

These activities illustrate the multiple axes of participant observation. I was not simply an insider or an outsider. Ethnically, phenotypically, I was clearly an

outsider looking in; likewise, I had more formal education and came from a more affluent family than permanent community members. But in practice I was somewhat more of a participant. Importantly, my location along the continuum is in part a function of the contrast between me and other kuss'aqs in the village. Not only did I participate in community events, but the other kuss'aqs typically did not, unless it was clearly related to their work. On a religious dimension, I was a participant. Certainly on the social work axis, I was a participant, arguably "more" of one than some in the community.

The nature of participant observation data collection requires being "on" at all times. I was always on the alert for how interactions impinged on the research questions, always trying to remember so that later notes would be accurate, always monitoring myself and how I was affecting events. With any permanent community members, I could not risk missing "data." I could not sustain such a level of watchfulness, however, and I took refuge with the kuss'aq teachers, the group I was most clearly a member of, especially having been associated with the school in the past and now still spatially associated with it. While interactions with the teachers were not irrelevant to the research, I nonetheless let my guard down and relaxed. To a large degree, impression management could temporarily be forgotten.

Interviews

My formal interview respondents were the three local service providers; selected other service providers, such as the school social worker, or officials, such as Traditional Council members, who were involved in particular cases; and various

community members. I chose the community respondents based on prior, more casual interactions or suggestions from others. Because I was interested in a range of opinions and insights rather than quantifiable data, this relaxed sampling method served my purpose. I included some Elders, though generally, I interacted with younger members of the community since I was most interested in the perceptions of people involved with social services, and the Elders were somewhat removed from those systems. I audio-taped all interviews when respondents consented and had the tapes transcribed by someone at the university. A local woman accompanied me to the homes of Elders and translated those interviews, the tapes from which were later translated again by someone else to provide a fuller sense of what was originally said.

I checked in with each of the service providers at least once a week for an hour or two of formal interviewing. Early on, I asked the providers to describe their jobs and how they got them, and I looked at their forms and job descriptions. As time passed, I asked more about actual situations, either ongoing cases or issues I was hearing about in the community (for example, the drinking that went on last night and led to a fight at 3 am), and their personal and professional thoughts about those situations. Towards the end of my stay, I asked directly for their thoughts about their culture and jobs. Likewise, I spoke with other providers about cases and other issues. Because I had multiple interactions with people, and in some cases, interviewed them many times, interviews were increasingly marked by a conversational tone. Usually I asked questions, but one informant in particular had

things he wanted me to know, and my questions came at the end of our time together. There were a few times that people sought me out because something had happened they wanted to tell me, either because it fit with their understanding of the project, or because they wanted a dedicated listener (usually the two overlapped). Despite the increasing friendliness of the interactions, however, they were never based on “friendship.” I can see some relationships developing into friendships. But the reciprocity of friendship was absent at this time. I was in the community for an instrumental as well as affective purpose. I was not simply “using” people, but the awareness that I could changed the flavor of the relationships.

Interviews with community members were focused on what they thought were the most troubling and the best parts of living in the village, what they did when having a hard time, and their knowledge and opinions of village services and providers. With a few exceptions, I interviewed the community members only once each. Typically, the tone was more formal, and I was more directive, than with the service providers. However, since I had already interacted with people, and like as not we were sitting in someone’s kitchen, there was still a strong conversational feel.

All told, I formally interviewed some twenty-five people at least once and have approximately seventy-five named individuals (all given pseudonyms) in my fieldnotes. The service providers, with whom I spent by far the most time, received individual stipends for their participation. To thank the rest of the village, I gave the Traditional Council a community stipend.

Data

My data consists of four kinds of text: interview transcripts, fieldnotes, a diary (actually, edited letters written to a friend), and pre-existing documents.

The transcripts are intended to reflect the “real” interviews as much as possible. Wanting to privilege “good speech” over “good writing” (Opie, 1994), I asked the transcriber to preserve false starts and to use punctuation marks to indicate spoken emphasis and pauses rather than grammar. Although in this dissertation I have edited direct quotes to facilitate reading, I have the original data with which to examine language usage later. (The IRB required that the tapes, with potentially identifiable voices, be destroyed.)

The fieldnotes are my accounts of events and interactions that I judged at the time to be related to the research, “the moment of initial ordering” and thus analysis (Clifford, 1990). I tried to be generous in what I included, and I have much data that will not be used here; I also included in the notes my initial analytic thoughts, separated by parentheses. I wrote about myself in the fieldnotes as well. I wrote in the 1st person and was careful to describe the setting and circumstances of the events. My “consequential presence” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 3) is in the fieldnotes though it is not the focus; I play a supporting role in the drama.

It is in the writing of these notes that the naive distinction between “being with” and “looking at” (DeLaine, 2000) becomes clear; regardless of how much I was “with” people in the event, I took a distanced stance when I wrote up the encounter – I looked at, I wrote about, often mentally engaging with my committee

and others in academia as much as with local people. I lived with people in the geographic field; I wrote for people in my scholarly field (Lederman, 1990).

In contrast, the diary-letters are explicitly about me. Here I focused on my own emotions and doubts and experiences of being there. It was cathartic for me to write these notes, and it was important for me to believe someone else was vicariously there with me. The diary also preserves as data emotional information about how I constructed the knowledge offered here (Young & Lee, 1996).

The other documents include job descriptions, blank work forms that the paraprofessionals used, and the Wraparound manual.

Follow-up

In the fall of 2002, a year later, I returned to the village to conduct follow-up interviews and check in about some preliminary analysis with key informants, mostly the local service providers, and to visit informally to get an overall sense of how things were going. Several community members had died in interim, some violently. I visited their families. I also attended an NYO meet and Mass over the weekend. I left the village after that trip with additional fieldnotes, taped interviews, and Xeroxed documents.

Chapter Five: “Remarkable Behavior”: Local perceptions & responses

The stage has been set, and in this longest of chapters, I narrow the focus to social work/social services in Unegkumuit. A typology of responses to “remarkable behavior” frames the chapter and an extended case study grounds it. In this chapter I stay close to the data though I move to increasing levels of abstraction.

Figure 3 depicts a schema of how the people of Unegkumuit respond to “remarkable” behavior, behavior that elicits remark, comment, notice. The categories progress by the level of directness of the responses. Although there seems to be some association between the perceived severity of the behavior and the directness of the response, local evaluations of severity are finely nuanced. No grossly defined issue such as “suicide” or “drinking” is captured by one level of concern or meets with a uniform response; a single social issue can activate a variety of responses over time or simultaneously. Thus, I intentionally do not measure distance between categories. Nor do I assume that there is a neat, staged progression from one category to another.

- *Idiosyncratic* behavior is unconventional enough to be noticed but is considered benign and nothing is done. This category will be of minimal interest to the analysis but serves as an important reminder that not all odd or irregular behavior is perceived negatively.
- *Troubling* behavior is not shrugged off as merely unconventional. People may share their mutual concerns among themselves but given strong norms of non-

Remarkable behavior; behavior that elicits remark, comment

Others' view of someone's behavior	Idiosyncratic	Troubling	Raises Concern	Worrisome	"Problem"
Response (increasingly direct response)	Do nothing	Do nothing	Group-directed "talking to": Frequently by Elders on ad hoc basis, also Topic-specific local conferences & gatherings	Targeted "talking to," by Elders or other community members Index person or his/her family members may seek out social network members or helpers (informally) to "talk to"	Formal bureaucratic systems get involved

-----responses can be traced to traditional means of social control-----

-----local paraprofessional service providers may be involved-----
-----selected school staff may be involved-----

-----professional service providers may be involved-----

Figure 3 Local constructions of "remarkable behavior" and responses to it

interference, no direct action is taken. This and the next two categories of response can be characterized as “traditional.”

- Behavior that *raises concern* is addressed in a group setting. Elders, especially though not exclusively, will “talk to” (that being the village English phrase most often used) groups on an ad hoc basis, for example classes of students or the congregation after Mass. Speakers typically tell personal and ancestral stories and remind the group of the right way to live. Periodic “conferences” provide another mechanism for gathering the community.
- *Worrisome* behavior is perceived as severe enough to warrant a more directed “talking to” response. An Elder, another community member, or service providers will informally talk to the individual or the individual’s family members. Alternatively, the troubled person or family members may seek out someone to talk to. The “talk” may consist of stories and rules for living, especially if the interlocutor is an Elder. The talk may also focus on the particular issue(s) of unease. In the latter case, the person who is the target of worry may talk as much as the responder.
- Finally, a line is crossed, and bureaucratic, external helping systems intervene with *problems*. Often, though by no means always, those systems work to cross purposes or override the more traditional responses. When fully activated, those systems are experienced as spatially distinct; services are provided outside the village.

In what follows, I flesh out the typology to address these questions: what kinds of behavior, speech, and interactions activate different kinds of responses? How do responses vary, conflict with each other, and complement each other as different parties are involved? Also, the paraprofessional service providers are involved all along; as community members, they note the behavior even when not formally working with someone. At what point, and by what mechanisms, do they “take on” the remarkable behavior as a work-related issue? Likewise, by what mechanisms are professional responses shaped as informal and thus kept local, and when does this occur? Put more abstractly, how are these hybrid systems

strategically utilized and maintained? How are various thresholds negotiated? It is the movement back and forth across the Worrisome-Problem line that is of most concern here. (Organizational and political responses, by nature indirect, do not fit the typology but will be addressed briefly towards the end.)

The composite case of “Nate”⁵⁹ illustrates how local perspectives on behavior and appropriate responses both are highly situational and are shaped by a broader consciousness of issues in and beyond the village. “Suicide”⁶⁰ is perhaps the most dramatic issue. A variety of “bad behaviors” culminate in “violence/aggression” at the individual behavior level and in a general sense that young people are “out of control” and lack “discipline” and “respect” at the community level. “Alcohol use/abuse” is the most widely recognized single issue in the village. It forms a back-drop to the others; not only is it addressed directly, but its presence figures prominently in people’s thinking about other behaviors. Together, these issues provide rich material for an examination of how thresholds are managed to mobilize formal and informal interventions.

Below I will explore how each of these behavioral issues and the various responses to them fit into the typology in inter-connected ways. I focus first on the behavioral issues of interest that the case of Nate raises, and which arise for other

⁵⁹ Please note, the case description *is* a composite; the specific incidents and reflections on them are borrowed from several situations. Drawn directly from my fieldnotes and interview transcripts, the account has been edited for ease of reading and specific names and personal details changed to match none of the actual individuals. Identifying details have been changed in other excerpts from the data as well.

⁶⁰ The names of categories used to code the fieldnote and transcript data are in quotes when first identified.

community members as well. I then invert the analysis and focus on the variety of response types within and across categories. In the third section, I look in more depth at various service provision issues suggested by the previous descriptive sections. I close the chapter by describing my thinking throughout the analytic process.

Direct practice: Individual behaviors that motivate response

I begin by introducing Nate and his family to illustrate how myriad issues are present for individuals and to provide a sense over time of how different issues are foregrounded within a single “case.”

The story of Nate

Nate, a 15-year-old high school boy, and his twin sister were the youngest children of one of the more respected couples in town. His parents, Miranda and Jim, did not drink and were regularly employed, mom at the post office, dad at the store. They were active in the local church, busy caring for extended family members, and as engaged in subsistence as was practical given other time constraints. They had two other children, young adults, including one on active duty with the National Guard.

During the spring preceding the fieldwork, Nate started acting “wild” and “disrespectful,” and his parents suspected he was drinking. He had been an excellent student and a reasonably well-behaved child; the changes startled them. Talking to him led to no improvement. They talked to friends and relatives; they sought out some people to confide in, or others called with concerns based on their own observations of Nate. Some of these community people talked to Nate about their own experiences, and some gave Miranda and Jim suggestions.

That summer, Nate’s parents sought help from “hospital agencies” - YKHC programs - and were referred to Jerry as the Wellness Counselor and a “psychiatrist”⁶¹ at the Bethel Behavioral Health office. They took Nate to Bethel to see the psychiatrist, who couldn’t remember Nate’s name and said Nate was fine. “He didn’t help much,” was the summary statement of that intervention. Miranda and Jim met with Jerry through the summer, but “it was slow.” Either Nate’s family or Jerry was often away “on the tundra” engaged in subsistence activities. When they were available, Jerry “had meetings and gave [them] brochures.” Father, the itinerant priest, was included in at least one meeting, as were an older couple who had raised many kids of their own. Miranda evaluated the meetings:

⁶¹ Village residents typically do not distinguish among the various levels of education and training earned by medical and behavioral health personnel. The clinician in question may have been a psychiatrist but more likely was a psychologist or clinical social worker.

they “were helpful for me and Jim - they encouraged us;” the meetings provided emotional support if not concrete assistance.

Nate himself met with Jerry only once, shortly after the school year ended, and that was informal. Nate said that “the village is boring, life is boring.” Jerry asked if Nate was suicidal. Nate said he’d thought about it but that he felt better now that school was out and he could go out on the tundra. Jerry’s intervention was focusing on a “community effort” and watching closely. He explained he knew of a situation in another village where a young woman wasn’t protected enough and she did kill herself, and he knew of other youth in other communities, about the same age, who had committed suicide (though because of break-ups with girlfriends). Jerry was also in close contact with his supervisor and sought advice from fellow Wellness Counselors.

Once school started, Miranda and Jim talked to the LKSD social worker, Jeff, as well.

Nate was suspended for a day very early in the school year for coming to school drunk. This was about when I arrived in the village, and a family member identified him to me as “one of the kids in trouble for drinking.” Others in the community expressed concerns about youth drinking and being generally “out of control.” One woman mentioned that high school “kids are getting worse today, more than” a few years ago, drinking listerine and such things. “Even parents who work and don’t drink or anything have kids like that.” That Nate and other youths were in trouble in the community as well as at school was confirmed at a Traditional Council meeting. Among other agenda items was the report from the VPO. He started his report with curfew violations. He’d given first and second warnings to a number of kids including Nate. In fact, Nate and a couple others had been caught out late three times, at which point they should have been assigned community service according to local policy, but service didn’t come up at the meeting.

Into September, I ran into Miranda. She asked how my work was going and said Nate was doing much better, i.e., nothing had happened recently. However, in art class a few days later, Nate wrote DEATH all over his art class assignment and was loudly asking about which way to slice one’s wrists. At the class break, Sam, the art teacher, reported his behavior to Jack, the principal. They decided to contact his parents and to make a referral to Jeff as the school social worker and to Jerry as Wellness Counselor. Jack wrote and posted a letter to Nate’s parents the next day and asked Carol as School-Community Advocate to “check in” with Nate because he was “grumpy.” Carol took him aside in the lunchroom and conducted a general “How are you doing?” kind of appraisal; Nate said he was fine.

A week later, Jeff arrived in the village, and Jack informed him of Nate’s behavior. This was the first that Jeff had heard about suicide. He met with Jerry and Carol and told them what happened in art class. The three decided that Jack and Carol would talk with Nate’s parents. Might the parents feel “scared off” if told suddenly Nate was suicidal? Carol and Jerry wondered. Aware that Miranda and Jim were already stressed, the team considered saying only that Nate was grumpy, but then Jerry said that Nate had been thinking about suicide during the summer as well. “Maybe that raises the stakes a little.” Then they realized that Jack already had sent a letter to the parents, describing Sam’s report of his classroom behavior, so the school could reasonably follow up explicitly. Meanwhile, Carol would take Nate aside and check in with him at least once again, doing a lethality screen and contract. Jeff was feeding Carol the questions; he left a list of questions with her. Carol did check in with Nate again, in a more focused way this time, and learned that

Nate was not right now thinking of hurting himself but that Nate was sick and tired of people following him around and watching all the time. "He would be fine if people would leave him alone!" For a while after this, Carol, Jerry, and Jeff attempted to check in with Nate when they saw him, but he wouldn't meet privately and just said he was fine.

Over the next few weeks, things with Nate were publicly quiet. People noticed that Nate's two buddies, two other youths frequently in trouble, were no longer allowed to visit Nate's home. His parents blame his peers here in the village and won't let them visit, one community member said. Jerry wondered if that's why Nate was outside so late, because his friends couldn't go in. He and Carol agreed they would never do that, not welcome someone to their house, especially kids' friends. Miranda had her own take on Nate's friends, however: she said the other boys would come to the house at 3 and 4 in the morning, knocking on the walls and under the house, to get Nate to go out. Still, they treated his friends like everyone else until they acted badly in their home, "threatening and being disrespectful" to their daughter. Then she and Jim wouldn't let them come over any more. "You know how it is when boys are disrespectful to girls," she said earnestly. She knew about Jerry's disapproval: he "even suggested how we should treat his friends," she later said indignantly. "I was really getting mad at him." Miranda did not directly blame Nate's friends for his behavior, but she hinted that she doesn't think the association helped. (They had a much longer history of getting into trouble at school and in the village.)

Older parents of one of the friends said they didn't know what else to say to their son and were praying about it. They seemed not to have given up entirely, however, for they spoke at a School-Family Meeting and told the students and the group at large that they were loved and they should respect adults and each other.

In mid-October, Nate, suspended again, sneaked in to the school with students going for study hall. A teacher told him to leave, as the suspension meant he wasn't allowed in the school at all, and Nate refused to leave. The teacher moved a little closer and repeated that Nate had to leave. Nate "slapped" him and ran down the hall. Another teacher, turning a corner into the corridor, saw this and tried to stop Nate; Nate hit him and kept running, but still remained in the building. The teachers then called the VPO. Nate "had to be wrestled to the floor" as one local person recounted the story later, and Nate ended up with a bloody nose and wearing handcuffs. The teachers also called Ethan, the ICWA Worker. Ethan joined the group at the school but there was little to do. The VPO walked Nate home.

Jeff was already scheduled to come into town the next day. He, Jerry, the parents, the principal, and the VPO met. Nate had left his jacket in his locker the night before and in going to get it for his parents, school staff found drawings of guns - someone pointing a gun at himself and at others. Was this a situation for a Title 47 (a court order for involuntary commitment)? Nate's parents seemed disinclined to take definite action, though they could make a Title 47 unnecessary since Nate was a minor. It was suggested that the group might want to think about risk - what was at risk, who was at risk, and how much risk were they willing to take.

School-based people were worried about safety in the school. They called a youth probation officer with whom Sam, the teacher, had a good working relationship; he suggested calling the troopers. The probation officer also promised that he would help from his end to ensure that if Nate came in for an assessment, it would be for at least 30 days - that he wouldn't be back in the village in 24 hours just more angry and convinced all outside efforts were useless. Jeff also consulted with his supervisor and with Terence, the

regional clinician for YKHC Behavioral Health, and Jack called the school district safety officer. All agreed action should be taken. By the end of the meeting, Jim and Miranda seemed more willing to permit an extended observation despite Nate's not wanting to.

A trooper did come and interviewed Nate. Nate was cocky and excited to be interviewed by the trooper - i.e., "How cool, I'm being investigated!" - and the trooper recommended following up this inappropriate attitude with an assessment. But the trooper decided that within his criminal justice jurisdiction, there was not enough reason for him to take Nate into custody, and this seemed to undermine his parents' leanings toward letting him go away. Terence was expected to come to the village and was qualified to conduct shorter behavioral health evaluations; by the end of the day, the group was waiting for him to arrive to conduct an assessment on site.

One school staff member, though disappointed that the trooper couldn't do more, expressed surprise at how "reasonable" he was, more interested in treatment than punishment. Some local people were less sympathetic and still talked of ways to have Nate taken from the village, resisting the professionals' consensus that his parents had to make the decision. "I understand the teachers feeling concerned for the other kids. Nate showed escalation of where we started acting on....Maybe it's a wake-up call for him."

Terence had significant problems getting to the village. Ten days later, he had not made it in but was still expected. Checking in with Miranda, she said Nate was doing better now "but it would be okay if that guy came to talk to him, because he's still not acting good and maybe he's still drinking." Jerry said he had promised Nate's parents someone from mental health would be here soon. He feared they wouldn't want to try Behavioral Health again because Terence was "losing their trust." He said he'd call his field supervisor, and ask him to figure it out. Another week passed uneventfully; Terence still had not made it out.

But Terence did make it eventually. He focused on the reported substance abuse aspect of Nate's behavior and arranged for him to have a phone interview/assessment with a residential treatment center in another part of the state. Nate was accepted for a 30-day inpatient program. "He gave different options for sending Nate to get help, like outside the village," someone close to the family said approvingly. Everyone else had suggested only things to do in the village. Nate was at the treatment center when I left.

Ethan played no direct role in these activities and was trying to minimize his role with delinquency. However, there are indications he was also being kept apprised of events. His knowledge of Nate's as well as his buddies' and others' behavior was part of his motivation in trying to organize a Child Protection Team under the auspices of the Traditional Council. "I guess these kids are going through pressure" and feel cornered, and like wild animals, they lash out.

Through the fall, a number of informants expressed surprise or consternation that a troubled youth like Nate could come from a family not easily identifiable as troubled as well. "Maybe it's something in the family, even though the parents look so good," speculated one person. Said someone else: "One student - I have a suspicion that he's depressed, and that's why he's acting out. He comes from a normal family; all of a sudden he's doing these - To me that's somebody to worry about because of all the sudden changes in behavior and - both parents are [well-respected] and, I would be worried about that student."

There is much to comment on in Nate's story. First, I review how people responded to immediate circumstances and issues, with contrast provided by other accounts from the data, and discuss how these issues fit into the typology: suicide, bad behavior, and alcohol use/abuse.

Suicide

Although Unegkumuit is one of a cluster of villages with a relatively low rate of suicide (Marshall, 1999), rates of suicide in the Delta generally are very high. The immediate stakes of addressing a situation adequately get no higher. However, even threats of suicide evoked a variety of finely-tuned responses and were not always seen to require outside intervention.

Nate

Nate's suicidality was Worrisome initially: already in the context of informally "talking to" Jerry, Nate was asked if he was thinking about suicide; he said he had been but is better. Jerry consulted with other YKHC paraprofessionals and worked with others locally to keep an eye on Nate for his safety. Notably, although presumably part of the "community effort," Nate's parents did not mention suicide. It receded from prominence for at least a month.

The response to Nate's suicidality in school illustrates the fuzziness of the Worrisome-Problem distinction. A kuss'aq-identified institution was directly involved, thus there were obvious connections to systems in Bethel; yet, the school was embedded in the community and run by someone committed to promoting local, Native control whenever possible.

Given that Nate was not judged by Sam, the teacher, to be an immediate threat to himself, a recognizable line of authority and procedure was followed at first: Sam reported to his boss, the principal, that day; together they decided whom else to inform. From here the intervention happened in slow motion and eventually petered out. Jack wrote a letter to the parents, insuring that at least a day would pass before they knew. A referral was made to Carol, sort of. She was not informed of the full situation but was told Nate had been moody; she talked to him once, briefly, and this was seen as enough until a week passed since Nate's initial signals.

When Jeff, the professional school social worker, arrived in town for a scheduled visit, he learned from Jack of Nate's thinking of a week ago but apparently not of the steps thus far taken. He was sensitive to Carol's and Jerry's concerns regarding Nate's parents' possible reaction to the news. At first Jeff took the same approach Jack took with Carol and suggested they focus on Nate's mood rather than his behavior. Such an approach might have felt more gentle to his parents and resulted in less worry. It was then that Jerry shared that Nate had considered suicide in the past; it appeared that although he wanted Carol and Jack to take care in their conversation with Nate's parents, he was unsure the issue – and threat – should be obscured. Then they all found out that the family already knew what the issue was and that it could be safely identified with them.

The direct plan, then, was for Carol to meet with Nate and do a more rigorous assessment of the danger he posed to himself, and for all three to check in with him. The indirect plan consisted of Carol and Jack consulting with Nate's

parents. The phrase “community effort” was not used again, though perhaps the check-ins were intended as a parallel form of monitoring. If that was the case, the absence of community participants in the check-ins is noteworthy. Perhaps others were not involved in response to Nate’s complaints about being watched.

Regardless, even the formal providers’ check-ins with him became less frequent and eventually ceased.

Suicide could have come up again but did not when the pictures of guns were found in Nate’s locker. There were drawings of a male figure – not necessarily, of course, but possibly, Nate – pointing a gun at himself. There were also drawings of the same figure pointing a gun at others. Given that the drawings were found in the context of externally-directed violence, perhaps it is not too surprising that the immediate concerns were for others’ safety. Still, it is striking that there was a conversation about a mental health assessment with the probation officer as well as criminal charges, yet suicide was not referred to explicitly.

Likewise, it stands out that although several more weeks had passed between this last possible indicator of suicide and Terence’s visit to the village, he too neglected to address suicide in his assessment. Conceivably he was not alerted to it by others; he was not the supervisor Jerry contacted during the summer, and people in Bethel were not called during the art class episode. On the other hand, some record of Jerry’s summertime consultations presumably were documented in Bethel, and Terence should have been told about the gun drawings.

Meanwhile, there was never acknowledgement by Nate's family that suicide was an issue.

Nate's story so far raises two key issues which I will return to later, for they will prove pertinent to other domains as well. First, informal helpers, in the form of other "community effort" observers, were kept out of the later plan, while a professional educator (Jack) was re-inserted into it and a formal, albeit paraprofessional, social service provider (Carol) took on a prominent role. This is not to suggest, however, that Jerry's, Carol's and Jeff's thinking was limited to people's roles; they were highly cognizant of the individuals and their relationships. *This service provider* had worked at the school for many years and had talked to many students at one time or another; that she took Nate aside in the cafeteria would have been less remarkable to other students than someone else doing so. *This principal* had been in the village for some six years and had made plain many times before that he took his students' well-being very personally.

A second, related, point is that the lethality assessment garnered the complaint that Nate didn't want people watching him. "Nate with my perspective is getting too much attention" commented one observer. This person explained that there is a word in Yup'ik, *kumayak*, suspicion, "watching every move," which the Elders spoke of in terms of marriage: "you can't put someone on a chain, limiting them, without destroying the relationship." Thus, it may have seemed reasonable, even though it was not discussed, to minimize the communal eye kept on Nate. What is the proper balance between protective and intrusive surveillance? Now that

spatial and social arrangements have so changed since the qasgiq days, how unobtrusive can protective surveillance be?

Suicide in Unegkumuit

Although not explicitly named as among “the major problems facing the village” in my data (that honor was reserved for culture loss, drinking/alcohol abuse, and child neglect), there is a high level of awareness of suicide as a fairly immediate threat to the community’s young people. I find three levels/types of awareness in the data: personal acquaintance with someone who seriously considered suicide, perhaps even attempted and/or completed; knowledge of someone identified by a third party who committed suicide; and abstract knowledge of suicide as an issue.

Everyone in the community knew the young man who killed himself in the early 1990s, and shortly after the fieldwork period, another young man killed himself. Both men, out of school, were drunk at the time. In addition, I ran into two former students who I know through my previous work in the village to have contemplated suicide, and I recall working with two other young women who also considered it. I heard nothing to indicate these others ever attempted suicide; still, I know at least some key family members and their closest friends were aware of these past situations. And enough people in the community followed current events that they must have been aware of other suicides in the region.

Furthermore, Carol worked with me on one case and played a background role in at least one other, and Jerry knew about a current student’s earlier suicide attempt; they knew of local suicide ideation through their work. Jerry also had a

cousin who came very close to killing himself and learned through his Wellness Counselor colleagues of people in other villages who made attempts. Plus, given the recent changes in his job description from VAEC to Wellness Counselor, Jerry had had some training in crisis intervention, including with suicide. Jeff, Jack, and Sam also had formal training around suicide though none indicated he had been confronted with it before.

People's level of sensitivity to the threat of suicide may have influenced their response, but again, not in uniform ways. Early on in Nate's case, for example, Jerry's awareness of successful suicides spurred him to ask Nate directly about suicide and to increase supervision of Nate, and it was Jerry who seemed least willing to let Nate's art class threats be obscured as moodiness. Yet, *after* those events, Jerry was among those who did not pick up on the threat to Nate himself implicit in the gun pictures. Perhaps at this point, he was following others' lead as to priorities, especially Jim's and Miranda's.

Jerry was not alone regarding the possible significance of the pictures. Jeff and Jack were at the meeting at which the drawings and the previous night's violence were addressed, and they also focused on the safety of the school. Both of them started serving the village after the 1990s suicide, and of course the other had not yet occurred; perhaps despite training and statistical knowledge, the threat still did not seem quite real. More likely, I suspect, their responses were informed not only by trying to address a serious issue, but also by awareness of themselves as outsiders and the need to let others take the lead.

There was another threat of suicide in the village during the fall as well. In this case, a girl in junior high was having difficulties when her parents went out of town to drink. At one point, two women from the community, one an Elder, asked Father, the itinerant priest, how to help her. It is interesting that they wanted to intervene in a more targeted way than, for example, reminding the group of junior high school students that they were valued and loved. They did not simply approach the girl or her parents, however. Before talking to her, they talked to the priest - not just anyone connected to the parish, but the "professional" religious figure. One of these ladies was a relative of a young woman who considered suicide in the past; I can only speculate that that relationship shaped her level of concern for this girl.

Although suicide stands out in Nate's story because there is such widespread general concern about high suicide rates among Yup'iks and Alaska Natives, in fact what is apparent in the account of Nate's story is that his violence and other "bad behavior" are locally perceived as more problematic. Indeed, these other behaviors seem to have overshadowed threats of suicide.

Bad Behavior

Nate was one of several teenage boys chronically in trouble at school and in the village immediately prior to and during the fieldwork. Although Nate stood out from the group of boys in some key ways, including his bad behavior being a recent phenomenon, his story not only illustrates the issues and responses unique to his situation but also provides a taste of other village concerns.

During the spring preceding the fieldwork, Nate's parents found his changed behavior and suspected drinking Worrisome enough to fairly quickly start talking to friends and relatives when talking to Nate himself didn't help. By summer, Nate's behavior had rolled over into a Problem and Jim and Miranda chose to talk to Bethel-based YKHC staff. Formal systems were activated such that Nate was scheduled to see a clinician in Bethel, though that line of response went nowhere fast, and a referral was made back to Jerry in the village. Jerry, having been trained to understand that official involvement begins with a proper assessment, would never consider Nate a formal client, effectively keeping him for Jerry's purposes on the left side of the Worrisome-Problem line. However, multiple systems, formal and informal, would become involved at multiple levels, about multiple specific issues. Nate's behavior covers the spectrum of Troubling through Problem.

Violence & Aggression among Unegkumuit Youth

NATE: The behavior that evoked the most direct responses was his striking teachers at school one night, exacerbated by the discovery of the drawings of guns.

One might expect that Nate's violence would immediately become a Problem. In fact the Problem designation required another step and proved to be a temporary one. To be sure, the VPO was called immediately, but it was the Traditional Council, not the troopers, who were automatically informed of the VPO's activities. The call to the probation officer was informal, a product of a previous working relationship, and it was only at his urging that the troopers were contacted. The school district safety officer, alerted because policy dictated that the

safety officer must be informed of threats to the school and its staff, concurred. The school social worker supervisor and Terence as the YKHC clinician were called as well, and both agreed that something needed to be done.

The surprise at the trooper's "reasonable" attitude points to some discomfort with what someone called the "law and order" character of the external interventions, but once the group decided not to apply for a Title 47 court order, all formal social service interventions were contingent on Nate's cooperation or Jim's and Miranda's overriding Nate's uncooperation. Although his parents seemed comfortable with permitting the trooper to take Nate into custody, maybe even with his being committed via a Title 47, they were unwilling to make a positive decision themselves that he needed services outside the village. But the trooper determined he hadn't the authority to take Nate into Bethel, and neither he nor Jeff⁶² had the expertise themselves to conduct a mental health assessment though both urged one, as did the probation officer. No assessment took place at this time. When Terence did visit the village, he did not address the violence and threats. Fairly quickly, Nate's violent behavior was squarely located back in the Troubling category; people continued to fret but did nothing more.

As before, Nate's story highlights some issues which will reappear and which I will explore in more depth below. First, when calls were made to

⁶² Jeff could be said to personally be straddling the Worrisome-Problem line. He worked for a bureaucratic system and provided professional counseling but on an irregular basis, and because he was employed by an agency that espoused a community orientation and *not* an individual mental health orientation, his ability to respond directly to Nate's violence was constrained. And as

professionals in Bethel, it was the state trooper who showed up. And second, while there seems to be some willingness to allow certain things to happen when others are the ones to act, there is also reluctance to assert control locally.

OTHER YOUTH: Nate was not the only young person to display violence or aggression that fall.

Another violent episode, involving other teens, took place at the end of November. A clerk at the store had to pull one high school boy off one of his friends, whom he was choking in the aisle, and to escort him out and lock the door. Some other community members observed the escort, but again the VPO and Ethan, the ICWA Worker, were the local people contacted first, and again the troopers were called. Again a trooper came to the village and made a report, but legal proceedings stopped there. Because there was no threat to school employees and the fight did not occur on school grounds, staff there did not get involved. Again no external social service providers came to the village, though it is unclear if any were called. To my knowledge, no formal referral was made to other local service providers, and Ethan did not get directly involved that day because he was out hunting at the time.

In addition to these current incidents with these teen boys, there was some recent history in the village of teen boys acting badly enough, including at times violently enough, to be taken into custody. In the last two years, two adolescent

situations arose with clients here and elsewhere more invested in working with him, his activity with Nate's case diminished.

boys had been taken into state custody and were now placed at the Bethel Group Home, a facility for youth in trouble who didn't quite qualify for the Youth Facility but were state dependents. In one case, the proximal cause for the boy's arrest was "criminal trespass," according to his father. But both boys had been in and out of trouble for a long time: "It was to the point the village couldn't handle those kids anymore....The [Traditional] Council tried to a point they didn't get anywhere. They wanted the school to make the decision" to involve bigger systems, explained one local person involved in the proceedings.⁶³ The Council wrote a letter to the state court judge to support the one boy's remaining in Bethel and custody.

Several sequences of response identified in Nate's narrative appear again. The VPO, the ICWA Worker, and the troopers were called regarding the fight at the store, but there was no follow-up, legal or otherwise, once the event was over. Likewise, there must have been a series of incidents involving the state troopers for the Group Home boys to have been taken into custody; they not only committed legal crimes but the Traditional Council had decided it could do no more to help. I will discuss later the Council's current efforts to intervene with people still in the village – note the absence of the Council in the data so far – but still, that the

⁶³ Note: "wanted" in this context is a village English word that does not map directly onto standard English. Suspecting this at the time, I asked why the Council "wanted" the school to act, and the informant said so many of the boys' problems were school related – truancy, breaking into the school. I asked if this was an accurate summary and he said "Yeah!" with some enthusiasm and a smile: that after trying to resolve the problem in Unegkumuit, the Council gave the school permission to request help from people and systems outside the village. "Wanted" here means not so much "desired" as "would not hinder" or "would not mind."

Traditional Council crossed a threshold of discouragement and frustration with these boys is important.

Adolescent boys attracted the most attention but were not alone in their violence. There were several incidents involving younger boys, especially from the “wild” 4th-6th grade class. Sometimes they fought with each other, in school and out; sometimes they bullied younger children, burying their faces in the snow and threatening to “do” them if they didn’t play. When some of this behavior was reported to the Advisory School Board (ASB), the Elder who is the ASB president warned against “too many people paying attention to kids” (his words translated at an ASB meeting).

Girls also displayed some aggression; for example, there was one 16-year-old who was very angry, though she was not physically violent. Furious at other teenage girls who got her cousin in trouble with the troopers, the day after his arrest, she sat at a school computer and “pounded out” (as one person described it) her curse-filled version of the story. Then she posted copies on the walls of the high school. “The diatribe ended with [the young woman] saying she’d hurt the girls if they did this again, and please everyone report them next time they drink so they’ll get in trouble like her brother,” I wrote in my fieldnotes. When Jack and Carol both invited her to talk to them, she ran out of school. Jack contacted her mom to say she’d left very upset and asked Ethan to do a wellness check at the house to make sure she was okay. He did not call the VPO or the troopers, perhaps because of the

different context: sense could be made of her threats (they did not appear random), and she had no history of violence.

Again in these data the idea of kumayak (“watching every move”) becomes important, as when the ASB president cautioned the school staff regarding the 4th-6th graders. Other points of note: we see Ethan being called when youth are in trouble despite his attempt to focus on child welfare rather than youth services; and that criminal justice but not social service representatives were called after the fight at the store suggests some confusion and/or frustration about when social services could be useful.

In contrast to these and other incidents of violence in the community and the school that occurred that fall, most discursive references to violence as an issue pertained to domestic violence. I was not privy to information about currently violent relationships, but several women mentioned their own or female friends’ and relatives’ past experiences, either in the context of another past event, or as part of a response to the question, What can people do to help their friends who are having a hard time? Alcohol was usually involved in the situations these women described.

That extra-relationship violence was not a topic of discourse itself reinforces what Nate’s story suggested: violent behavior in youth was seen less as an issue itself than as one more indication of generally “out of control” youth.

“Out of control” youth: The absence of “discipline” and “respect”

NATE was initially identified as wild and disrespectful. His parents suspected drinking and others in the family and community concurred, but Nate

refused to engage in a formal substance abuse assessment with Jerry. Thus, through most of the fall, substance use per se was not the target of intervention. Regardless of his using, however, other behaviors and attitudes evoked response.

For Miranda and Jim, Nate's behavior was Worrisome. They talked to Jerry, who met with and provided materials for them. Jerry arranged for them to talk to other local resources such as the priest and a couple with now-grown children. They themselves sought out or were approached by others in their family/social network to talk to as well. Talking to others – some others – provided some sense of emotional support.

His parents' talking to Nate himself achieved no change in his behavior, nor did their family and friends talking to him. Jerry, Carol, and Jeff tried on occasion to talk to him but he rarely acquiesced. Nate's curfew violations resulted in warnings ("stern talkings to") from the VPO and could have resulted in community service assignments. This kind of behavior wasn't serious enough to bring in external systems, and as already seen, even outright violence elicited limited interventions from professional systems outside the village. Nate's behavior was Worrisome to his family, community, and to village-based providers, but the targeted talking to did not help. Thus, Nate's behavior reinforced a broader sense that kids were out of control. Or, as Miranda put it a few times, "disrespectful."

As various informants verbalized their concerns about young people in the village, their **WORD CHOICE** was particularly instructive. Although many people, service providers and others, mentioned truancy and curfew as specific

issues, there was as much generalized anxiety about the absence of “discipline” and “respect.” Before returning to the data and illustrating people’s worry, I examine the (village) English words.

The Oxford English Dictionary, *the* rulebook for standard English vocabulary, contains many definitions for both words. Many are archaic or do not fit with local Unegkumuit usage. Borrowing the most applicable entries, “to respect” implies both behavior and attitude: “to treat or regard with deference, esteem, or honour;” as a noun, “respect” also means “regard, consideration” (OED online). “To discipline” is “to instruct, educate, train; in later use, more especially, to train to habits of order and subordination; to bring under control,” or discipline is itself the “instruction having for its aim to form the pupil to proper conduct and action...[especially related to] mental and moral training” or “a system or method for the maintenance of order.” When instruction fails, to discipline is also “to chastise, thrash, punish” (OED online). It is illuminating that the word “discipline” stems from “disciple,” a committed follower of a person, a path, or a practice.

Traditional Yup’ik expectations of behavior and attitude governed not only relations among individuals but between human being and animal being, human world and numinous world. The world in its right state was seen as ordered, with prescribed means of maintaining that order. Education consisted of modeling and molding “proper conduct and action,” one outcome of which was treating and regarding all persons (yua, not just human persons) “with deference, esteem,

honour, and consideration.” That everyone would be a committed follower of yuuyuraq was taken for granted.

Thus, it makes sense that “discipline” and “respect” are associated with these other village English words that connote ihuma: conservative, modest, love, care and careful, trust, friendly, strict, strength, persistence, perseverance.

Now new rules for living are emerging. Criticism and concern were not directed at or about people following western-identified rules; for example, the academically talented young people currently away at the state boarding school were never to my knowledge censured for focusing on book learning, even when it meant neglecting subsistence. Rather, it was the behavior that implied no rules, no consideration, no commitment, no ihuma, that led to anxiety. “There’s no discipline; parents have to discipline their kids; the school needs better discipline; they need more respect for Elders, parents, teachers” were constant refrains. Several informants, all parent and grandparent aged but not the oldest Elders, mused rather nostalgically that the old BIA schools had enforced discipline with corporal punishment. No one actually endorsed the contemporary use of corporal punishment in the schools, or even at home, but that they framed the use of rulers and paddles positively made their frustration with the current state of affairs even more compelling.

Explaining how she talked to undisciplined students who were referred to her, Carol said: “I tell them, ‘I can’t do it for you, you have to do it for yourself. It’s up to you, if you wanna go through school and get up and accomplish something in

school, it was all your doing, not me or your teachers. We're just here as resource people, as people who care that you get through school, and it's up to you.' I guess that's how life is, it's up to us, if we want something bad enough, we have to work for it to get there." In other words, self-discipline was required. But as one Elder observed, "Kids today do not listen well" to such advice.

LIKE LOOSE DOGS: Some of the violence described previously contributed to the sense of kids' lack of discipline and respect. Likewise, non-violent "bad behaviors," which fall into four categories: "truancy," "curfew violations," "break-in & theft," and "miscellaneous" (usually generic references to kids in trouble, typically at school). "Young people are losing discipline and respect for properties" one middle-aged parent quoted his older mentor. Or as another community member put it more colorfully, "They're like loose dogs running around."

The same few teens consistently were mentioned by name, although I also had conversations with people about (as I inscribed it at the time) "the variety of students – not just the usual few – who are dramatically misbehaving in school (wandering around the halls out of their classrooms, pulling the fire alarm)." That a variety of community members knew about those few teens (Nate and his friends, a few others less regularly) is demonstrated by the man who reported his 4-wheeler damaged and immediately blamed them; in fact, in that case, the VPO determined that someone else who borrowed it had inadvertently caused the damage.

The responses among service providers and community members alike to the specific status offenses began as potentially direct, hovering over the Problem category. However, they quickly slipped back to Troubling and intermittently Raised Concern. As in Nate's case, youth whom the VPO identified as violating curfew were taken home and later reported to the Traditional Council but nothing was done beyond that; the Council reports were de facto more informational than to stimulate action. Similarly, school district truancy policy was followed insofar as school staff contacted parents and could have eventually reported families to the courts. But the young people most likely to skip school often, for reasons other than family obligations, were at least 16 years old, and their parents tended to unenroll them to avoid legal fines. Once their status changed to "dropout," the school and courts had no jurisdiction. And once the school and the Council, each already positioned as a hybrid local bureaucracy (though neither with a social services mandate), ceased to act, community members were left to fret and to talk to groups of young people when they could.

Community members, especially Elders, did talk to groups of people given the opportunity. Nate's friend's parent was one of many parents to speak at the School-Family Meeting. An Elder woman came to help with the high school girls' Culture Week traditional lifeskills classes and exhorted them to respect their parents and relatives and teachers, telling them they were lucky to have people to love them. Elders regularly spoke at the end of Mass, telling people not to drink or gamble and to watch their kids carefully. (As summarized in English for me by pewmates, the

Elders at Mass directed their Yup'ik-language speeches to adults rather than youth; they seemed to realize that the teens who went to church were not the undisciplined ones.)

Criminal behavior such as theft, in contrast to status offenses, was reported to the troopers, at least some of the time. Again, how the external system responded was situational. When the trooper came to Unegkumuit right after the fight in the store, he had already intended to come to investigate some thefts and “break-ins” – uninvited, late-night entries into locked homes. But the violence pre-empted the other investigation, and the trooper did not return to follow up. Again, the community was left Troubled and Concerned. (That people were locking their doors at night was itself an indicator of change and worry, one person pointed out.)

A variety of behaviors contributed to the anxiety over the lack of discipline and respect. Too many students were following neither traditional nor school/western rules, and there seemed to be no mechanisms to persuade them to behave more responsibly. The other behavior that added to the sense of kids being out of control was drinking. Again, the responses put the behavior most often in the Troubling and Raises Concerns categories, as there seemed to be a sense of helplessness and/or reluctance around talking to people directly or calling in others.

Alcohol (ab)use

Like suicide, alcohol abuse is one of the most widely recognized social problems in the region. Frequently deemed “the main problem in the village” by my informants and in keeping with the literature, alcohol was perceived both as an

issue in its own right and as a contributing factor to most other negative remarkable behaviors in the community.

Community Use and Abuse

“Alcohol is the main drug used locally, [Jerry] answered when I asked; mostly it is imported and bootlegged, but there is some homebrew and some people drink mouthwash and such. And there is gas sniffing, which some people are really addicted to and which is seen as a gateway drug (he had to search a bit for the term),” I wrote in my fieldnotes early on. I also heard references to marijuana but not to other street drugs.

Certainly the data support the widespread use of alcohol. Many adults, some now in formal and informal positions of responsibility, freely admitted they were in recovery. One older man, recently put on probation for a misdemeanor committed outside the village, had an official substance abuse assessment and was referred for inpatient treatment during the fieldwork. (His was the one case where alcohol was deemed a Problem and official treatment services included in the intervention.) Other adults were periodically mentioned as having been partying the night before, especially when their children missed school or came to school very sleepy. (These young children were not identified as “truant” in the context of kids’ own bad behavior.)

There were also young people known to be drinking. A student who had recently been asked to leave a school elsewhere for violating alcohol prohibitions continued to drink here in Unegkumuit. I heard about a small cluster of late-

teenaged school drop-outs drinking fairly frequently; another girl whose parents noticed her absence one night and found her drinking with some friends in an abandoned house, and another student who ended up with a black eye after successfully pressuring a friend to drink and then fighting. There were also several loud “parties” that traveled around the village; I was woken up on two occasions by drunken arguments on the boardwalk outside my trailer. One of Nate’s friends wrote an essay about the first time he smoked pot, and the student who pressured his friend to drink told me he had pot as well.

Besides awareness of current drinking and its sometimes incendiary effects – on domestic violence, as mentioned above, or fights on the boardwalk – there was also an awareness that drinking could be dangerous to the drinkers. The two suicides to have occurred in Unegkumuit in recent memory both involved alcohol. Furthermore, someone from a neighboring village, a relative to some here, had died in a snowstorm the previous winter when he incautiously took his snowmachine out while drunk. And during the fieldwork period, there were two deaths in nearby communities. One was an alcohol-related drowning accident in the late summer. In a village that had a road, a young man, driving drunk, accidentally “bumped” a pedestrian with his borrowed pickup and killed him.

“PFD time” – the period during which families were getting their Permanent Fund Dividend checks, the oil revenues distributed to state residents each autumn – was a time of increased drinking. This seemed to be the case all over the region, such that troopers had their hands full trying to prevent shipments of booze from

Bethel. They relied on local people to alert them to shipments arriving at specific destinations. A limited attempt to do this was one response to the situation that didn't fit the typology – direct but not targeting individual drinking behavior. One person, for example, knew of an incoming shipment during PFD time and told me of her intention to call the toll-free number to tell the troopers so they could check the plane before it left Bethel. On another day when a trooper was expected for other reasons, someone commented she “wish[ed] there'd be a bootlegging today so the person would get caught.”

Nate

Given this background, it is unsurprising that Nate's parents would foreground substance abuse as the Problem he faced, not only when they first started to worry, but also much later when Miranda said it would be okay for Terence to talk to him. He went to school drunk the one day, and his buddies were identified as drinking at least some of the time. Certainly not only Miranda and Jim but also Carol, Jerry, and other community members took it for granted that he was drinking. And so Nate's parents talked to various formal and informal resources; presumably Nate's suspected drinking as well as his other behaviors (though apparently not suicide) were part of those discussions.

It is never clear what Nate himself thought was the primary issue, other than people watching him too closely. He talked to Jerry once and also to troopers, occasionally Jeff and Carol, and eventually Terence, but none of these interactions was initiated by him. Each person was most attuned to either his considering

suicide or his violence, as addressed, or his substance use. Perhaps at his parents' urging, that is what Terence focused on, and Nate did qualify for inpatient treatment.

Suicide was not identified as an issue after the art class episode. Even if Nate ceased to consider committing suicide, it is striking that other mental health issues were not raised even as possibilities. Where people spent many weeks waiting for Terence and the substance abuse assessment, no one mentioned in my hearing that he should evaluate Nate for anything else. One person wondered if Nate was "depressed," but she was not in a position to shape official interventions. It seemed that anxiety about bad behavior, and substance use as a specific kind of bad behavior, superceded all else. Alcohol was indeed an issue in the village and for Nate; but whether it was the only one was never actually established.

Young people's drinking, and other behaviors, were often seen as linked to their parents' behavior, including *their* drinking. Although out of control youth who came from families locally designated as distressed were not absolved of responsibility for themselves, it did seem to ease other people's minds that they could identify cause and effect. Thus Nate's behavior, including his drinking, were seen as especially disturbing; as suggested by community members' comments, they couldn't understand why *he* would act this way. It also suggests that local evaluations of families may have shaped people's tolerance for individuals' behaviors. Because people could not easily attribute Nate's drinking to his home environment, the threshold for including outsiders shifted.

After the fieldwork, a young man in a neighboring community, who was described to me as similar to Nate in key ways, “suddenly” exhibited behaviors that local people perceived as wholly out of the range of “normal.” He required psychiatric hospitalization and psychotropic medications, with the strong approval of his family. His story suggests that conventionally-framed mental illness is in fact an issue in the region, albeit a less common issue than alcohol abuse and even lack of discipline. I wonder – I can do no more than wonder – if the response to Nate’s behavior would have been different if this other young man had gone to the hospital sooner. It seems possible that while alcohol does have a strong presence in the village, it is perceived as causal for other issues simply because people are sensitized to it and have an idea what to do about it – such that other possibilities are not considered. It seems possible that stereotypes about Native people and alcohol, in conjunction with critiques of outside clinicians being over-enthusiastic in their diagnoses and a service system that relies heavily on minimally-trained paraprofessionals, have led to the neglect of conventional mental health.

This is not to suggest that all the youth identified as out of control should be evaluated for mental illness, that individual-level psychopathology should be the default position service providers take when there are difficulties. Nor is it to suggest that Nate necessarily had a diagnosable mental illness. However, the rapidity of change in Nate’s behaviors, his contemplation of suicide, and the absence of other known family-systems reasons for his behaviors, all elements that

distinguish his case from others', suggest that a comprehensive evaluation that included but was not limited to substance abuse, may have been in order.

The goals of this section have been twofold. The first was to illustrate in detail how different kinds of behaviors evoke comment and other formal and informal responses. The second was to begin to note what social service issues warrant more thoughtful attention. The composite case of "Nate" and ancillary anecdotes from the data provide a rich picture of issues and services on the ground and one fruitful way "into" the questions of how social issues are problematized, or not, and then how interventions are chosen, or not.

In the next section, I focus on the responses themselves.

Direct practice: Responses to remarkable behaviors

Foregrounding the typology introduced in the beginning of the chapter (Figure 3), here I examine the categories of responses, teasing out what comprises each cluster.

Idiosyncratic behavior and Doing Nothing

As indicated briefly earlier, this category is a placeholder for those behaviors remarked upon as unusual but tolerated; in particular, behaviors seen as outside the individual's control. I do not have examples of this response from the fieldwork data but did experience situations during my time as a practicing social worker. For example, in one community, a woman with developmental disabilities greeted every plane and shook the hand of anyone standing nearby. Though her family may well have received some social services to aid their care of her, there was no sense that

her behavior should change. Doing Nothing in a case like this one refers to addressing the idiosyncratic behaviors themselves; I do not mean to suggest that people decline support services.

Troubling behavior and Doing Nothing

This category consists of three subsets of response groups: reinvigorated, very indirect, mostly “traditional” attempts to shape behavior; a waiting, “patient” attitude toward those for whom active efforts to help have not worked; and private steps that may be taken by the index people themselves. What distinguishes this category from the others is that these disparate responses are not expected to change the intentions of the person whose behavior is considered Troubling but to provide opportunities for ihuma to grow naturally. Doing Nothing in this category refers to appearances, to the level of directness when someone else is responding (wholly indirect) and the level of publicity when the troubled person is responding (wholly private).

Shaping Behavior by Traditional Means

Elders and people of all ages emphasized that individuals troubled/in trouble should be treated “with [intensified] respect” – even more lovingly, positively, “like trying to show that person how much you care for them.” They should be praised for their good qualities, and people should be “friendly” to them on the boardwalk. Ideally, everyone treated everyone this way all the time; in a less than ideal world, people should make a special effort to (implicitly) remind people they were valued when they seem to have forgotten. The troubling behavior was not the verbalized

focus of interaction, though the responder may have thought of him/herself as intervening.

All of the local social service providers praised the idea of increased engagement in traditional activities, what one referred to as “traditional modalities” – hunting, fishing, survival. One teen boy *not* identified as undisciplined, Jerry explained, for example, had an uncle who took him out on the tundra; this was seen as protective. Likewise, Jerry said that he knew of (younger, active) Elders who took boys out, and the previous spring, he himself had taken one high school boy, who did lack discipline and who didn’t have a male relative available, out sealhunting. It would lead up to counseling, he explained. Although that youth declined to talk to Jerry in any focused way, he did “start smiling at him” around the village: at least in this limited context, the youth became more friendly and respectful (though his overall behavior continued to cause negative comment). Jerry, in particular, has worked with young men like this before, as Father described him: “hunting and fishing, modeling being a Yup’ik man who has bridged the gap between the cultures.” However, as suggested by the case of Nate, I did not see or hear about the providers actively intervening in this way during the fieldwork period. The boys whom Jerry (and Ethan and others) wanted to engage during the fieldwork were not invited or not interested enough in subsistence to participate in such activities. One boy, for example, expected a working snowmachine and other equipment to be provided for him rather than earn money himself or even ask to borrow equipment himself (seen as further evidence of his being undisciplined, and

Jerry as the adult was unwilling to do all the work). I am reminded of Stern's (2000) point about subsistence competing with other recreational activities for young people's attention; if it wasn't easy and convenient enough, interest diminished.

Traditional activities as an intervention were brought up much less frequently with girls. I can think of four complementary reasons for this. First, I suspect, many "traditional" female activities were still part of many girls' and women's routine: childcare, washing, cooking, sewing. Second, some female-identified activities both were seen as fun and were less constructed as special events requiring extensive mentorship: beadwork, berrypicking in season. Third, meat and fish processing was dependent on men's supplying the raw materials and so relatively out of service providers' control. And fourth, Carol was the only female service provider in the group, and her extra role filling in for the school secretary made her work time less flexible than it might have been otherwise.

Respect was supposed to be reciprocal; treating someone with respect was supposed to subtly encourage them to respond back with increased respect, as it did – somewhat – with the youth taken sealhunting. Given all that was happening in the village, however, I wrote in my notes at the end of September, one Elder's "vision of treating people with respect and thus getting them to behave well struck me as rather idealistic, and I could not ask the right questions to start him talking about the exceptions to that rule." What should happen when treating someone lovingly, etc., failed? Traditionally, there were two options remaining, short of banishment from

the community. One was ostracism, which I saw in play around one woman who was blamed in part for her adult child's criminal behavior. People moved slightly away from her in church, and another woman commented, "I don't think people are saying hi to her and stuff." The other option was "patience."

Patience

Patience was invoked under two related circumstances – because people weren't sure what to do, and after other interventions had been tried and failed. Both of these situations arose with Nate. Community members noticed aspects of his behavior and commented among themselves (and to me), but there was some sense of helplessness and resignation if they were not well-enough connected to the family to feel comfortable talking to Nate or his parents. This kind of patience may have been the response of the mother of the young man who committed suicide after the fieldwork ended. Reported one service provider during my return visit, his mother said after the fact that he had talked of suicide but she didn't know what to do about it. So she waited and hoped.

We also saw with Nate how after the flurry of activity following an event, everyone was left without much to do but confide in each other. There are times when "anything you work for them doesn't seem to work. But they [Elders] say 'be patient'It's up to the family or the student if they want to take the opportunity," reflected Carol. "If a person chooses to disregard what they were told then there really isn't much that we can do," offered an Elder.

Private Measures of One's Own

When I asked what they would do when personally having a hard time, several people indicated they would try to help themselves. A few people said they kept journals or wrote poetry. Most often they said they tried to take a positive attitude, would “sit and meditate” out on the tundra, or would pray or read the Bible, as did Nate’s friend’s parents.

Christianity may have been a greater personal resource than I have in my data, for it wasn’t until interviewing a woman I already knew to be very active in the church that I noticed the absence of any mention of God or religion in respondents’ answers. “That was my first thought when you asked that question,” that woman said when I inquired, but she thought kuss’aq rules of “research science” proscribed mention of God. There is no way to know how many previously-interviewed informants might also have mentioned religion/spirituality had we not been in a formal research setting.

“Talking To” Groups when behavior Raises Concern

The responses grouped in this category are linked by their general, inclusive audiences, even when it is specific individuals’ behavior that triggers their activation. In contrast to responses to Troubling behavior, there is the intention here and in subsequent categories to correct the hearts and minds of the people whose behavior Raises Concern. Hopefully they will be inspired by the Talking and change their ways.

Elders

In keeping with the desire for young people to hear the rules for living more often (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 9), Elders and many others of all ages held up the life and interactions of the *qasgiq* as a model for instruction. “In the time of the men’s house, they disciplined them very well....They taught by telling their experiences and the lessons they learned from them as a way of directing and correcting the young men and boys.” Although contemporary Elders did not grow up in the *qasgiqs* and women’s satellite houses, they recounted that they had learned by listening to *their* Elders tell stories. Today, they feel a responsibility to pass on their wisdom and are likely to speak at various gatherings.

A School-Community Meeting was hosted by the school in mid-October; the principal introduced it as an opportunity for school staff, the ASB, parents, and community members to talk to each other. There was an “open mic” and of eleven speakers, seven were Elders, including the ASB president (I think he was the only one designated ahead of time to address the audience). All reinforced the same message, directed to students. I summarized it at the time: “they love the young people and want to help them, and the school rules are made to help the students be disciplined.” (Note the endorsement of school – *kuss’aq* – rules for helping shape *ihuma*.) Some speakers used more religious imagery than others, but the emphasis was on discipline. One grandmother added a personal note to parents. She “was the only one to say explicitly to parents that when they see their kids changing, they should seek help. She said she feels sad that her granddaughter is [away from the

village] but she's happy she'll get the discipline and schooling she needs." Elders regularly spoke at the end of Mass and at school, generally about the same topics. Teachers were actively encouraged to think of ways to weave Elders' contributions into their curriculum plans.

The students' reception to the Elders was mixed. Some at the School-Community Meeting and in a few classes I attended seemed to pay close attention; others seemed to be sleeping. One local observer sighed and described students' reactions thus: "You know they're doing other things, playing with something...I don't think their total attention is there." However, no one pointedly ignored Elders or whispered during the talk.

Presentations

Younger adults Talked To groups of people as well, again, especially to students at school. After identifying drugs and alcohol as the main problems facing the village, one Elder said, "It would be good to go to the high school and have an Elder talk to them. Even if the people talking to the kids were not Elders it would be okay." I did not see the service providers (or other younger community members) go into classes during the fieldwork, but all were supportive of the idea and said they had done this in the past. Presenters from outside the village also came to the school; for example, community educators from the regional women's coalition/shelter came out to the village that fall to talk to students about sexual abuse/assault prevention.

There were also presentations at two recent local conferences. The three paraprofessional service providers led efforts to bring regional experts and Elders to talk to the community at large. Significantly, youth were not the only targeted audience. Intended to be an annual event, the first local conference was held three years before the fieldwork and focused on substance abuse (both responding to the issue and contributing to its prominence in people's thinking). The organizing committee had considered inviting a speaker from the lower 48 but Elders discouraged them: "that person has not seen how we live or how drugs and alcohol affected our community." Knowledge of local culture and day-to-day life was as important as substantive knowledge about substance abuse, and few outsiders knew local life. In fact, self-disclosure by Yup'ik and other Native people was the modal style of presentation; as with the Elders in the qasgiq, they told of their experiences and lessons learned. That this was a form of public expression younger people were uncertain of, was implied by some of the presenters as they described how "shy" they had felt. Whereas Elders had by definition earned their place at the microphone, others' own sense of legitimacy there was weaker.

The second conference, held two years earlier, targeted families "with children going through trouble." Featuring Elders, it was about "passing down traditional values and lifestyle to children.... Things opened up for us [of the] younger generation" when so many Elders from different villages spoke, commented one audience member. Organizers raised funds to reduce the travel costs of families from neighboring villages. The service providers hoped to host

another conference during the winter following the fieldwork but were not actively preparing for one, and people said when I returned that a conference did not take place.

One modern twist on Talking To male youth, in particular, was a video project designed by Jerry and Jeff, the Wellness Counselor and the itinerant school social worker. Another attempt to encourage young men as a group to adopt more traditional, disciplined habits, the video was about fishtraps, a subsistence tool. Jeff credited Jerry with the vision and expertise: “We’re actually filming and discussing the importance of subsistence and how it relates to culture. We’ve interviewed an Elder and we’ve done some filming around the village. I think his intentions, his vision, is very hopeful; he wants to put together a movie and have kids watch it....He told me what to film, and I’m there with the camera.”

Although the project had not been completed when I returned a year later, various other issues having taken precedence, both said they remained committed to finishing it and making it available to this and other communities. Teens in the YK Delta watch a lot of TV, and they saw this project as an attempt to meet them on their own ground. “There’s really no home-grown educational tools.”

“Talking To” individuals (& family) whose behavior is Worrisome

The village English phrase Talking To here encompasses several overlapping kinds of interactions. Dimensions that varied include the following: whether the interaction was 1:1 or a very small group where an individual was the object of worry, whether the individual with the Worrisome behavior or the

interlocutor initiated the contact, and who did most of the talking. Often used as a synonym for “counseling,” there were two distinct (though not mutually exclusive) modes of Talking.

Talking To as Advising

The most traditional situation was that described generically by an Elder, as translated in the 3rd person: “If [he noticed] you needed help, he’d go over to you, talk to you, visit you, and tell you how much he cared...you’d start feeling good about yourself.” He, as the Worried party, would approach the individual, and he would be the dominant speaker. The content of his talking would be similar to that of an Elder talking to a group; he would not only say how much he cared but also “give advice” or “give guidance” and tell stories from his own life that illustrated why the advice was important. In line with “counseling” as “advising,” as when a lawyer is referred to as “counselor,” this kind of talking to often was labeled “Elder counseling.”

There is a Yup’ik name for someone who performs this Talking To role, Carol explained, *qanrucista*, “someone who talks to someone, a student or a person, who listens to your problems and who gives advice.” Qanrucistas need not be Elders, she said, and were different from shamans, she clarified when I asked. In fact, the English term “social worker” still being closely associated with child protection workers sweeping in and taking children away, Carol said she used this term when introducing new (usually *kuss’aq*) school social workers to parents.

Explicit advice was both pragmatic – i.e., if you keep drinking, this could happen – and cultural. Carol said she told one young woman who felt betrayed by friends that “it’s our way not to try to seek revenge.” Advice was also embedded in the personal stories. For some community members and service providers, self-disclosure was a valued part of talking to someone, as it was in talking to groups. They appreciated hearing how others had dealt with difficult situations and took opportunities to tell others how they had dealt with them. One woman who had been diagnosed with depression and had taken medications for a while, several years earlier, was frank about her illness and recovery. Others shared stories about their struggles with alcohol, hoping their listeners would thereby be inspired and gain knowledge of how to stop their drinking too.

Unsolicited advice and stories were not always welcome, however. Nate’s mother’s indignation that others would tell her how to treat Nate’s friends suggested that “talking to” had its limits: advice could be perceived as too directive and perhaps condescending. Carol once tried to repeat a friend’s story about a situation similar to a community member’s, explaining how the friend sought advice from an Elder and how successful the advice was; her intent was that the community member should do the same. Carol was firmly rebuffed. “That would not work in this situation,” was the clear message. Carol did not approach that person again (nor was she approached).

On occasion, advice was solicited from Elders or family members and friends. Or, as with a suicidal teen (not Nate) described earlier, community

members sought advice from Father, the priest. (In general, Father said separately, he preferred to “help the helpers” and not engage in direct pastoral counseling himself.)

Typically, when the Worrisome individual was not present and someone was talking to people about him/her, the interaction was with parents about a child. In particular, the service providers and school staff conducted what local people routinely referred to as “family counseling,” advising parents how to treat their children or trying to increase a sense of home-school collaboration. Though supported in principle by numerous community members, specific parents seemed less enthusiastic about being told how to treat their kids.

Supportive Talking To

As individuals might use private means to deal with the personal problems they identified for themselves, so they might also seek out friends and family to Talk To, with the emphasis on their sharing their own thoughts and feelings – as endorsed by some Native scholars and activists (Duran & Duran, 1995; Napoleon & commentators, 1991). Community informants of all ages mentioned siblings, parents or grown children, friends in the village and in other communities, and partners/spouses as personal resources; they might or might not be recognized qanrucistas. Although it varied whether people wanted exclusively to talk themselves or wished also to hear from others, almost all seemed to desire comfort as much as guidance. The young woman who “pounded out” her aggression toward her peers arguably was Talking To an unidentified audience for emotional release.

Because they wanted support, people did not specify going to talk to Elders in their role as Elders. One young woman did mention her grandmother, and two women who were Elders themselves sought the solace of peers. Only when concrete advice was sought did people go to Elders per se.

Interestingly, listening was not necessarily considered “counseling.” A community member who did not currently hold a local social services position but had participated in some training elsewhere said she could listen to people who wanted to talk to her but could not advise them; “only counselors” could do that. Likewise, an active member of the parish council said “yes” when asked if she ever did “pastoral counseling” but refrained from using the word “counseling” herself. “I just listen to them, be friends with them, and comfort them, and just tell them other sources of help like maybe Elders.”

Service providers, on the other hand, referred to both advising-oriented talking to and supportive listening as counseling, and emphasized listening more. Listening per se not being considered “traditional,”⁶⁴ Jerry described how he learned in training that he should let others share their feelings. “When I first became a counselor I didn’t understand, but I learned...just try[ing] to get the person to talk about their problems is the main goal of the treatment.” Ironically, local evaluations of Jerry’s counseling were tepid (“oh, him”) – perhaps *because* he was trying to be non-directive and so wasn’t seen as accomplishing anything. An Elder told a story

of gaining insight when a doctor advised her to talk to someone about her grief over a friend's death, and how that was effective so now she tells people the same. "The mind can cause a lot of turmoil but if you talk to someone about your problems you can become better."

Jerry described one past effort at non-directive family counseling with a couple, where dynamics of the adult relationship were the focus and where he did not tell them personal stories. He said it was "hard, a lot of tension, blaming." He realized quickly he had no training for such work and aborted the attempt.

Jeff, the school social worker, emphasized support in his counseling. Carol typically directed him to talk to certain students during his visits. Still establishing rapport and trust as a newcomer to the community, and trying to downplay his professional "expertise," Jeff was intentionally trying to foster local control, including taking a non-directive approach when he talked to people and declining to call in other external systems unless deemed absolutely necessary. His "check-ins" with students such as Nate were no more compulsory than were Carol's, Jerry's, and Ethan's. Thus, Jeff's interactions with students or their families were not perceived as much different from, or more official than, the local service providers'. Even the lethality assessment he guided Carol through with Nate served as less a formal intervention than a determination of whether anyone else should be consulted.

⁶⁴ Perhaps because of her training, Carol may have added to her definition of *qanrucista* the part about listening to problems; someone else omitted that part in his definition: "the one who gives

When Talking To is Inadequate

The query “what happens when talking to someone doesn’t result in any changes?” was an unpopular question with young people as well as Elders. More often than not, people evaded answering. Some said that being patient, as discussed previously, was the only option. One person employed by the Traditional Council mentioned banishment as “a traditional way” but couldn’t or wouldn’t elaborate. A Council member, asked directly about banishment as a current practice, paused for some time and then said, “I have no idea. They [a previous configuration of the Council] tried but it didn’t happen. I’m sure there’s a law, it happened in the southeast[ern region of the state] one time....It’s hard to answer [about] that banish thing, it’s hard.” Other people mentioned the recent attempt at banishment: a known bootlegger refused to leave and the Council did not force him. Although these informants disapproved of the Council’s failure to make the man go, they were quite vague as to how the Council might have forced him since the troopers had been long unable to collect sufficient evidence for legal action. (This is not an area I pursued in depth, but I think the legal issues involved in enforcing a banishment could be prohibitively complex if the Council’s opinion doesn’t already carry moral weight with the individual.)

In a variation on banishment, one family in Unegkumuit did temporarily kick their undisciplined son out of the house when talking to him saw no

directions, or the one who talks about what values are.”

improvements. After about a week, his family allowed him home for meals and “he started acting nicer again” and soon was permitted to sleep there again.

Jeff’s involvement in cases as the school social worker was locally perceived as only about as official as village service providers’; meanwhile, the involvement of other, external social service systems was contingent on formal assessments and the cooperation of potential clients. During the fieldwork period, formal assessments were very few and those that occurred saw no local follow-up. Thus, the involvement of external systems with Problems and individuals’ departure from the village were closely linked. “Problems” were resolved by sending people away. Notably, although no one used the word “banishment” in the context of these Problems, there was strong feeling in the community that the village was better off without certain people in it.

Calling in External Systems when behavior becomes a Problem

Sometimes simultaneously with group-directed and/or individual-directed Talking To, sometimes after Talking To was perceived to have failed, village service providers and others recommended formal assessments for some individuals. During the fieldwork, one adult was assessed for alcohol abuse in the village. This man agreed to participate, and Jerry conducted his assessment.⁶⁵ The man was

⁶⁵ The assessment consisted of asking a series of questions listed on a form. After the interview, Jerry would fax the packet to YKHC and mail the original. A treatment team in Bethel would determine the diagnosis and plan, usually in phone consultation with Jerry. The three treatment options consisted of residential treatment in Bethel, intensive outpatient treatment in Bethel, both of which would be followed up by aftercare in the village, and (regular) outpatient in the village. The intensive outpatient program is “more structured” than the regular program with more sessions per week. Although “traditional modalities” (subsistence activities) were locally evaluated more

referred to residential treatment in Bethel. A teen girl expelled from another school for drinking and now back in Unegkumuit did not keep her local appointments for an alcohol abuse assessment and did not receive treatment. The several youth who served as the basis for "Nate" did not even make appointments for substance abuse or mental health assessments. Eventually one did agree to meet with Terence, who came from another village, and like the adult, that boy was referred to a residential treatment center away from the community. Another young man from Unegkumuit who was assessed for substance abuse that fall was assessed in jail in Bethel. Although there were few cases from which to generalize, the emerging pattern suggests that formal substance abuse assessments led to externally-structured treatments that occurred elsewhere.

All references to mental health evaluations were located in Bethel or Anchorage: "Nate's" meeting with the psychiatrist, another student who had attempted suicide several years before, a woman who had been diagnosed as depressed, other unnamed students referred to YKHC. The 30-day evaluation the probation officer offered to facilitate for Nate would have been conducted in Bethel. What follow-up to these assessments there was always involved Bethel-based clinicians as well. Whether community members understood that Jerry or Terence

favorably than the 12-step program for fostering recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous seemed to be an integral part of the regimen at any level of intensity. Jerry hosted AA meetings twice a week but said no one was attending this fall.

could provide mental health services in the village, perhaps in tandem with services in Bethel, is unclear,⁶⁶ but they were experienced as occurring elsewhere.

All told, most formal assessments and all formal interventions were associated with leaving the village. Therefore the reaction to Terence's visit of Nate's family network member made sense. It was the person who "gave different options for sending [Nate] to get help, like outside the village" – and who arranged for him to get help elsewhere – whose efforts she found helpful. Supportive, non-directive counseling, as with local service providers and Jeff, didn't accomplish anything. If outsiders were going to be included in helping, results were expected.

Yet, Nate's parents had the opportunity to assert the need for Nate to go to Bethel for an assessment, for example with the help of the probation officer, but they declined even after expressing willingness to let the trooper take Nate with him. Their actions echo the direct statement of another community member about Nate and some other youth: "I wish they would just take those boys away." The statement was greeted by nods from the group gathered casually in the school lobby, and someone else added that it was better since the boys currently at Group Home were taken there.

I wish *they would take* them away; things are better since the Group Home boys *were taken*. People were frustrated, but they were not angry. The tone was not one of wanting to see the boys punished but of wanting them to get help the

⁶⁶ Tellingly, when asked for their understandings of local social service jobs, no one identified Jerry or his job with mental health, though most people did connect him to substance abuse.

community didn't know how to provide – from the professionals who could force them to receive it. One professional social worker based in Bethel, with years' experience in the region, observed that a lot of people saw Youth Facility more as a treatment option than as a criminal intervention. A village resident talked about substance-abusing parents going to “treatment or jail” in one smooth breath, supporting the observation and suggesting that the logic applies to adults as well. A Traditional Council member, too, spoke of “the cops and more professional [social service] people” as a group.

It is noteworthy that the practice of badly behaving youth leaving the village for some length of time perpetuates a history of Native youth being away from their communities. Teens' absence from their homes due to mandatory attendance at boarding schools is among the contributors to historical trauma among Native Americans in the Lower 48 states (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Although not mentioned by Alaskan commentators (Napoleon & commentators, 1991) – indeed, there seems to be some support for boarding schools (“Education Study”, 2001) – the overall trend in teen absence nonetheless seems important.

That criminal justice-sponsored “residential services,” so to speak, were seen as viable resources helps explain why the state troopers were called as often as social service providers. Moreover, in contrast to formal social services being experienced as happening mostly outside the village and having to wait for the few formal services that were provided in the village, the troopers showed up in the village when called. Trooper interventions, this particular fall, typically led no

further than social services interventions. But there was a history of the pair of boys having been eventually taken to the Group Home and improving there, as well as of several grown men having spent time in jail who, for example, no longer battered their wives. This history of accomplishment, in combination with the troopers' more predictable arrival when called, contributed to a sense of greater reliability.

Not everyone saw the social service and criminal justice systems as wholly interchangeable under all circumstances. Recall the people who wanted to see the local bootleggers arrested or banished; they were not interested in the bootleggers' getting help but in getting them away to help the people who drank their merchandise. Also, one of the local service providers was the only person to comment that boys such as Nate were developing criminal records that might have implications for their futures. Even this person, however, supported calling the troopers as "a wake-up call" when local attempts to talk to these boys were unsuccessful.

Short of the Group Home and Youth Facility, there were other places young people with Problems might go/be sent: the military school program at Fort Richardson outside Anchorage, the Bethel Alternative Boarding School (BABS), and various treatment centers located around the state. These programs were voluntary, but eligibility was predicated on a recorded history and/or diagnosis that indicated trouble. Unegkumuit had adolescents placed at all of these programs during or in the years just preceding the fieldwork, contributing to an overall sense that sending kids away was a very realistic option. Stated baldly, for youth whose

behavior was perceived negatively, an issue crossing the line from Worrisome to Problem usually entailed the kid getting on a plane.

Their families and other community members were left in the village to wait, but with more relief and more hope than before. However, it is hard to say whether that hope was well-founded. Two teen girls quit (or were asked to leave) BABS and the Ft. Richardson program during the fall of the fieldwork. Those programs required an initial commitment and level of self-discipline for success, the absence of which, broadly speaking, was the reason for the girls being there in the first place. Their behavior continued to be considered Troubling and to Raise Concern; their short residence in Bethel and Anchorage did not help. However, the young people who found enough internal resources or motivation to be able to stay were reported to be improving; likewise, the boys at the Group Home were said to be doing better. During the fall of the fieldwork period, no one returned from an external program having successfully completed it, putting it beyond the scope of this study to judge whether the Problem interventions were helpful. Given that nothing was being done with the families waiting back in the village, such that their home/community environment would be the same when they returned, there seemed some reason for doubt.

Although I have no evidence that people were thinking consciously about the line between Worrisome and Problem behaviors, I suggest that the history of colonization that led to the current hybrid professional/paraprofessional, Yup'ik/kuss'aq service system has worked together with a Yup'ik inclination to

indeterminacy to allow people room to negotiate situations such that certain goals are accomplished without direct (and culturally less appropriate) action being taken by community members. Nate's parents reached a point at which they wanted – in the sense of desired, at least to some degree – Nate to receive treatment outside the village, and in fact that is what happened, without their personally making it happen. This is not to suggest that the outcome with Nate was the best possible or that current services are sufficient, or that there is not ambivalence when formal systems are activated. But I think it is important to point out that people can use current system configurations strategically, instrumentally; unfortunately, this arrangement also leaves outsiders in the position of authority. I will return to this issue in the final chapter.

Indirect practice: Organizational and political responses

Although not captured by the typology, there were two other kinds of responses to negatively-perceived behaviors. One was the Child Protection Team, a local system to organize interventions with children and youth under the auspices of the Traditional Council, in the earliest stages of organization. The other was the Traditional Council itself, specifically its ability to create and enforce local ordinances to shape behavior. I have limited data about these kinds of responses; however, what I do have suggests that the community already senses its own potential to “manage” the Worrisome-Problem line, to negotiate the fuzziness described above more intentionally – if the community as a body and key community members also have the will.

Child Protection Team

There were two preliminary meetings of the Child Protection Team (CPT) during the fall. Ethan, the ICWA Worker, was the primary organizer; to meet with a Child Protection Team was a responsibility listed on his job description.

Notwithstanding a short-lived attempt to organize a Team several years earlier, these meetings were the initial efforts to broaden community participation in the burgeoning local control of children and youth as concurrent jurisdiction was slowly put into practice.

Printed information from consultants at AVCP (photocopies in my possession) – and indeed, the Team’s name – framed CPTs as a mechanism for enhancing village-based child protective services; identifying abused and neglected children and intervening with their families were described as the primary functions of CPTs. Abstract descriptions of the Team’s goals provided by Ethan and others coincided with this mission: it’s “a little committee that once some incident happens, their role is to meet the parents, like a little [directive/advisory] counseling session takes place.” However, in line with other expressions of anxiety around out of control teenagers, discussion at the CPT meetings and in preparatory meetings between Ethan and Jerry highlighted teen behaviors. At a joint meeting of the Traditional Council and the ASB, at which Ethan and Jerry presented an overview of CPTs, truancy was the focus; how might the Council, via the CPT, be included in the school’s attempts to get high school students to attend class?

The vision seemed to be for the CPT to develop Tribal Case Plans. Endorsed by the Council and disseminated to the ASB and the school, the plans would explain the duties of the parents and the youth and various other parties. More details were absent from any discussion, and “we need to think more on that” was the refrain at the two CPT meetings and in conversations after the meetings. However, members of the Team shared a strong sense that the Traditional Council and CPT, and the school and ASB, should be communicating more closely and formally.

Community members whom Ethan initially encouraged to participate included Jerry as the substance abuse expert; Head Start teachers; school employees such as Carol, Jack, and the special ed teacher; VPOs; Community Health Aides; Jeff; and a local woman who had worked as a clerk for DFYS in Bethel. At their preparatory meetings, Ethan and Jerry wondered how to engage other community members (i.e. parents) but were pessimistic that people would get involved without extra “motivations” such as a stipend. “You don’t think people will care enough to join just because they care?” I asked at one such meeting. Ethan answered, “They care. But they need a motivation to come.” Jerry added, “It’s stressful. Making decisions is hard; some cases are hard.” The active solicitation of community participants was postponed until the Team was more established.

There was a lack of clarity regarding how to get the Team organized. Some members wanted to start “working cases” immediately, despite there having been no formal referrals to Ethan lately let alone to the CPT as an entity, and despite an

inability to answer when asked what they would do with those cases. Some members were concerned about confidentiality and knew they needed a release of information signed – but again, by whom and for whom was vague. After the first meeting, Carol said she left it “feeling like there was something missing;” she wanted a training so they would know better what they were supposed to do. Jeff, involved in his other villages with CPTs with longer histories, could have provided such a training but was intentionally not offering his services. “I don’t think we needed to come out of that [first] meeting with a clear vision....I think it’s better to let it evolve into something that’s from the community for the community....[In another village] it’s like, ‘we can’t have a meeting without Jeff,’” and he wanted to avoid repeating that dependency.

When I left the village, Ethan and the Team were trying to write a statement which the Traditional Council could use to formally authorize the CPT to act on its behalf in matters of children and youth. However, the budding Team did not meet through the following spring, and by my return visit the next fall, the Council had not officially acted. But the ICWA Social Worker from AVCP had just come to the village to meet with Team members and Council members, providing the training Carol had wished for (but the trainer was clearly positioned as not a Team member herself, so bypassed Jeff’s concerns), and people seemed both re-energized and clearer regarding what steps to take. A separate training on Tribal Courts which several Council members attended in Bethel that second fall also spurred people to work more intently on the Court in Unegkumuit. Ultimately, the Tribal Court was

expected to replace state courts in village family and youth cases that required legal intervention, thus would work with the CPT. Though little had concretely changed since the fieldwork, there was a sense of promise as people updated me on the Child Protection Team's status.

Tribal Ordinances

There were two ordinances on the books that Unegkumuit tribal members, service providers and community members alike, were keenly aware of: prohibitions on the possession and sale of alcohol, and on gambling.⁶⁷ A variety of people complained about these ordinances not being enforced. "We're a dry village and they should search people at the airport; they should follow their own by-laws; they just don't go after them" were frequent criticisms of the Traditional Council. Factually, the criticisms were legitimate. The Council itself sponsored daily bingo and "rippies" as a source of funding, and there were stories of some Council members and Council employees drinking without apparent rebuke.

But again, what exactly the Council or its employees were expected to do was not clear. Part of the challenge was how other laws and policies may have impinged on local options. When one person said the VPOs should arrest people when they're playing cards instead of watching their kids, I asked if they needed warrants to enter someone's home uninvited; he looked confused and changed the subject. Part of the challenge was the gap between what people wanted in the

⁶⁷ Gambling was widely seen as a precursor to child neglect because parents spent such long periods of time at the bingo halls and at each others' homes playing cards.

abstract and what they did. For example, a group of mothers complained one day of one of the VPOs drinking late the night before with their teenage kids. They resented that the VPO was “distributing to minors” but did not seem to mind that an adult was drinking, nor did they note the irony that that adult was paid to enforce the “dry” ordinance. Someone did ask if he were on duty at the time, and he was not; in this conversation, that seemed to absolve him of his obligation to obey, let alone enforce, local law. Certainly none of these women indicated they were going to report him for drinking (or for not enforcing the curfew).

And part of the challenge was the fact that the Council was not an abstract body but was composed of community members whose personal relationships were at stake with every unpopular decision. Older members seemed somewhat immune from criticism. However, younger members, who had not earned their authority as had Elder members (or Elders in general), yet who were increasingly looked to because of their greater comfort with English and with western systems, seemed to feel caught. “I get mocked for being a leader. I know who they are [doing it], ...but they ain’t here trying to help our people. I’m not saying I’m better or worse than them...” said the TC president. In another context, a member of the Council said plaintively, “It’s hard, when you have to make the right judgments for the right reason and make it happen.” In a community the size of Unegkumuit, in a culture that still counts relationship and humility among its fundamental values and practices, judging right and following through posed the most serious challenge of all. Judging others at all was frowned upon. Having the confidence to judge and

follow through could be perceived as arrogance, and the consequences of making the judgment could threaten the relational cohesiveness of the village.

The fall I was there, and in recent history as people described events to me, the Traditional Council reacted to the challenge of making unpopular, confrontive decisions by avoiding it when possible, leading to other community members' frustration. When the bootlegger the Council banished simply refused to leave, the internal attempts to address that person's behavior stopped. When during the fieldwork, the troopers were called in (again) about an assault too public to be ignored, a Council representative quite defensively denied that the Council had called them. The Council did not mete out community service to Nate and others who violated the curfew ordinance. Even with the boys currently placed at the Group Home, the Council had acquiesced to the school's calling in external systems but did not call them itself. Like Nate's parents, the Traditional Council seemed reluctant to assert its will.

Nonetheless, that the Council had passed ordinances in response to problems, and that community members expressed dismay that they were not enforced consistently, indicates a growing tolerance for pressuring people to change their behavior. While the increasingly direct responses included in the typology are dependent on the individual's choice to behave in locally approved ways, or on people external to the community insisting that they behave, local ordinances are structured such that the community in general and the Traditional Council in particular can impose consequences when people do not conform – though it

remains to the individual Council members and their employees to enforce the ordinances. Whether by developing locally-specific consequences, or by requesting aid from others outside the village, there was room for the tribe to take more positive control over intolerable behavior unaffected by other responses, and a hint that the community was becoming more prepared to accept the implementation of such policies.

Thresholds and fit: Systems considerations

The analysis so far suggests that there are three overlapping but distinct contrasts which need to be weighed when considering social service provision in rural, Native villages. First, professional and paraprofessional service providers; second, formal and informal services/helpers; and third, external and village-based systems. That these contrasts cannot be neatly folded into a single binary, professional/formal/external vs. paraprofessional/informal/village-based providers/services/systems, offers a glimpse of the complexity of the service terrain – and of the myriad constraints and spaces for services for individuals whose behavior is locally perceived as problematically “remarkable.”

Professional vs. Paraprofessional Service Providers

As suggested by the literature, this contrast is the most heavily laden with ethnicity-linked cultural presuppositions. It is assumed that professional social workers are non-Native and grew up in places other than Alaska Native villages; more specifically, they are probably white and probably grew up in cities or suburbs. Paraprofessional social service providers, on the other hand, are assumed

to be Native, in the YK Delta probably Yup'ik, and to have grown up in Native villages or rural hub towns such as Bethel. Thus, the level and quality of providers' knowledge of the culture of village residents, clients⁶⁸, is thought to be inversely associated with the level and quality of their training.

This association can no longer be taken for granted as the number of professionally-trained, Native social workers slowly increases. Nonetheless, it will be many years before there are so many Native social workers that the contrast ceases to be pertinent. In Unegkumuit, as still in many villages, the Native-paraprofessional, kuss'aq-professional association did hold. Indeed, the current configuration of services, with its heavy reliance on paraprofessionals, was designed in part to insure a greater degree of cultural relevance by employing Native people who lacked extensive formal education.

That said, three items related to service provision and cultural knowledge stand out as especially worthy of attention: intra-village cultural evaluations, managing relationships, and the relative prominence of professionals in the village.

Cultural Evaluations

Native, paraprofessional service providers may be called to work with clients whose own understanding of cultural values, or their investment in enacting them, differs from the providers'. One illustration of this situation arose in "Nate's" case earlier, when local service providers disapproved of Nate's mother violating

⁶⁸ Earlier, I avoided the word "clients" because individuals whose behavior was at issue (and their family members) frequently were not formally positioned as such. Now that the focus is more

the hospitality/care ethic and not allowing his friends to visit. In the traditional mode of counseling-as-guidance, she was advised to treat his friends differently. She, having thought about her reasons for keeping them away, was annoyed, and this incident contributed to a decrease in contact between the family and the providers, and a decrease in the potential for services to help. Again, the point here is not to rebuke anyone for their performance; indeed, the providers did exactly what they were supposed to. They used their own knowledge of their shared culture to identify a space for change; if Nate's parents welcomed the friends and cared for them, perhaps their behavior would have changed and thus also Nate's own. And they talked to Nate's mother about the change after the model of the *qasgiq*; they gave her advice without extraneous questions about how she felt.

The point here is that even when service providers and clients mutually identify/are identified as from the same cultural background, their understandings of which values matter most under what circumstances may conflict. Even if Nate's mother agreed that, in general, hospitality is important, her threshold for its activation differed; or perhaps her additional insight into how the boys were behaving in her home, coupled with her own tolerance for it, moved the threshold in this situation. Regardless of that particular incident, however, perhaps the social work mantra "starting where the client is" – which requires discerning "where" the client is before doing anything – is usefully borrowed even when service providers expect to know intuitively.

directly on services, however, I will employ the term more often for ease of expression.

The additional point here is that clients may not choose to act or think in culturally-endorsed ways, and service providers need some clarity about how they want to handle such situations. If Nate's parents had simply not opened their home to anyone, or did not share their subsistence harvests, or renounced beliefs in a Christian God, would the service providers have been able to find other common ground on which to base a services relationship? In taking on remarkable behavior within their jobs, the local service providers must negotiate cultural "correctness" beyond their own interpretations. It is not enough to acknowledge that "being" Yup'ik/Native means different things for different people; it could be a service delivery issue when the service providers are themselves invested in being Native and have already decided what that means.

Managing Relationships

A second culture/services issue is how different service providers manage the interpersonal relationships that are at the heart of service provision. Though relationships also pose a challenge for professionals, they can be especially demanding for paraprofessionals. Even when intra-community cultural differences are not at issue, dual relationships can be fraught with difficulty when the shared culture puts a premium on amiability.

"It's hard to make decisions about people you know all about, it hurts the relationship," said one of the Unegkumuit paraprofessionals late that fall. YKHC Wellness Counselors were charged with conducting substance abuse and mental health assessments. Similarly, ICWA Workers assisted child protection social

workers and might even conduct investigations for low-risk referrals. Although in both cases final determinations were made by teams in Bethel, paraprofessionals were consulted. School-Community Advocates did not engage in such categorically charged situations but, like the others, made referrals to other services and agencies. As much as programs such as the new Wraparound project might promote a spirit of collaboration between service providers and clients, there still were situations in which providers had to make judgment calls – and to be locally accountable. All three in Unegkumuit had stories of clients being irritated, if not outright angry, with them. In a culture that stresses the maintenance of relationship, this is a significant risk.

During the fieldwork period, there were no reports made to DFYS and then to the ICWA Worker that required his assistance, and only one (cooperative) adult went to the Wellness Counselor for an alcohol assessment. But both paraprofessionals avoided opportunities to be more active. The ICWA Worker encouraged people to contact the VPOs when a youth's behavior reached a crescendo. The Wellness Counselor did not remind people that he had the authority to conduct assessments when Nate was not taken into Bethel and the YKHC clinician could not get to the village. Nate had already declined to talk to Jerry, and his standing back may have been a signal he'd gotten the message; but it may also have been out of a desire not to be seen as too eager to force a decision on another's behalf. Not only Nate and his family but others in the community might have been resentful. Likewise, all three paraprofessionals were careful to check with

supervisors when it seemed they might have to do something unpopular. By passing responsibility onto others, they also sidestepped (at least somewhat) the social awkwardness of accountability.

The above quote about its being “hard to make decisions about people you know all about” also points to another challenge for service providers working in their own small communities, the likelihood that informal knowledge of families and individuals will inform work-related thinking about them. Acting as a consultant to Bethel-based social workers is particularly ambiguous. There is the knowledge of a situation gained through working on a case, and there is the knowledge gained through other channels – having kids in the same class, overhearing a conversation at the store, local hearsay. Though not a problem I was aware of while I was in Unegkumuit, it seems reasonable to speculate that paraprofessionals might struggle to balance how much to share with their teams in Bethel, or how much to use extra knowledge in their own decisions.

It is worth noting that Native professionals probably face the same challenges around how their and their clients’ cultural values match, or not, and how to use informally-acquired knowledge of clients.

Relationships are potentially a challenge for kuss’aq professionals as well. The “friendliness” required for a one-time evaluation or even an intermittent therapeutic relationship is much less than for ongoing, frequent contact, and the personal stakes of a sour relationship are much less for people whose relationships

are only business. Nonetheless, “the professional use of self” is a key tool for helping; rapport is a necessary ingredient to good social work.

As indicated in the earlier literature review, “face time” is an important contributor to rapport. Interestingly, it can be a collective phenomenon. Although new to the village, the school social worker visited regularly; also, Jeff had school social work predecessors and people knew of his position even when they didn’t know him, and that history with the job allowed people to feel they knew Jeff better. The YKHC village clinician position, on the other hand, was a new job, and Terence made it to the village only once. Thus, overall, many more people knew and felt more comfortable with Jeff than Terence; where some people mentioned seeking out Jeff, no one mentioned Terence outside one specific case. On the other hand, rapport benefits from a sense of services accomplishing something, and as discussed, it was Terence’s referring Nate to an external treatment center that was experienced as productive (which is not to suggest Jeff’s less directive approach was not experienced positively by less dramatically troubled clients). The state troopers benefited from both: they came when called so even when they did not take someone into custody, there was a sense of something happening; and one or another trooper came frequently enough that there a collective sense of familiarity.

Prominence of the Professionals

A third issue for social service systems planners to consider is how active a role the professionals from outside the community should play. Local expectations and broader Native political goals do not line up neatly, with professional social

workers awkwardly in the middle. On the one hand, approaches to counseling identified as more traditional are also more directive, and local evaluations of responses were more positive when professionals did something concrete.

Especially if professionals are doing things local people want done but do not wish to do, it would seem that social workers should assume some level of control. On the other hand, Alaska Natives are engaged in efforts to promote self-determination, including around social problems, such that it would seem outsiders should step back when possible. Also, social work has embraced “empowerment” (Simon, 1994), which also would lend itself to local rather than professional decision-making. There is no easy solution to this dilemma, but it bears more discussion by village community members as well as program directors.

There is an emerging picture of a situation in which paraprofessionals are reluctant to risk their interpersonal relationships with other community members and are content to let others for whom the stakes are lower make the hard decisions, even as some of those others from outside are loathe to make decisions they see as properly the community’s own to make. Social work as a profession struggles with this tension in other contexts as well (e.g. Mokuau, 1987) and has not found a satisfactory answer.

Formal vs. Informal Helping

The contrast between Native paraprofessionals and kuss’aq professionals situates the paraprofessional service providers as local, highlighting their social as well as geographical closeness to clients and other community members, in contrast

to the professionals' distance from them. The contrast between formal and informal helpers, however, emphasizes the ambiguity of the paraprofessionals' position, for here they are situated with the professionals, employed by and working within the same overall service systems. Who gets involved in a case, and how, become crucial questions here, for while there are opportunities for numerous individuals to help, formal responses are limited in who is actually invited, and by whom.

Clients rarely approached the paraprofessionals for assistance. When they felt themselves having difficulties they couldn't handle, they sought out Elders or friends and family, or possibly someone connected to the church; occasionally, as with "Nate's" parents, they called professionals in Bethel or perhaps reached out to the school social worker when he was in the village. In other words, when clients took the initiative themselves, they typically turned to people not formally linked to the social service system at all, or to people whose formal link was the most salient thing about them. When others observed someone having difficulty, they were likely to talk to that person or talk to a group that person would be part of; or they waited and hoped things would improve.

The paraprofessionals entered the picture if and when either the other resource people called on them or when the index individual followed advice to seek them out. School personnel collectively were a key referral source, especially for the School-Community Advocate of course, but also for the Wellness Counselor, the ICWA Worker, and Bethel-based professionals. Sometimes the paraprofessionals were the ones to observe the client and try to talk to them.

What is important for service delivery, I suggest, is what happens once the paraprofessionals are involved, for they are the formal helpers who are consistently present in the village. The paraprofessionals were willing, even eager, to make referrals to professionals, both to people wholly outside the village and to itinerants such as the school social worker and the YKHC clinician. They seemed less willing to include community members who were not part of the formal system. Father and another couple were brought in to support Nate's parents but never participated in later conversations about other kinds of interventions. There was an early "community effort" to watch Nate but it was not renewed. The community women who asked Father for advice regarding another suicidal teen were excluded from the plan when formal providers addressed that case. Everyone so far recruited to the Child Protection Team held jobs related to child well-being, though not necessarily social service jobs, and efforts to recruit other community members were deferred.

Confidentiality, I suspect, was in part why formal helpers were shy about including informal participants in the process. The service providers seemed willing to confer with each other regardless of signed releases of information. But all seemed aware that theirs was a closed circle of people; they were not disregarding confidentiality but rather making a pragmatic decision about resources – and their own need to share their feelings about their work. To have included others who did not understand the boundaries of the discussions would have been disrespectful to the clients. And while it was always an option to ask for signed releases, such

requests were awkward where individuals often were not formally designated clients already.

When I left the village, confidentiality within the Child Protection Team looked to be a challenge. The CPT was larger than the small group of social service providers who talked among themselves, and all Team members realized they could not freely share clients' personal information. As a community-based attempt to increase local supports for families, did the Team need a signed release for every family that came to its attention, and if parents refused to sign one, was the Team paralyzed? Was a CPT member prohibited even from sharing concerns with the rest of the Team if s/he did not get a release first? Parents who did not sign releases and who did not want to be counseled by Team members were likely to be the parents of children people were most worried about; what was the Team's position then?

I do not know if the CPT has resolved these issues yet. What the CPT does with confidentiality bears watching, for it could serve as a model for including informal helpers in more formal service plans even when the CPT per se is not involved in a case.

External vs. Village-based Systems

This third contrast moves the focus away from the individuals and their roles to the systems themselves, to the organization of the helper roles. Currently, the service providers are employed by agencies based in Bethel. (Although ICWA Workers are officially employed by their respective Traditional Councils, they are trained by AVCP, and their substantive peers are each other across villages rather

than other Council employees.) The Bethel agencies cannot be simplistically characterized as kuss'aq or Native. Two of the Bethel umbrella agencies, AVCP and YKHC, are Native-led and Native-dominated though with significant numbers of kuss'aq staff. The school district is a public bureaucracy dominated by kuss'aqs but with increasing numbers of Yup'ik professional educators, many paraprofessional aides, some Native people on the district-wide School Board, and all-Native village ASBs. (The state troopers, not social service providers but clearly pertinent, are employed by the state but also intentionally increasing their Native staff.) The Bethel agencies are based outside the village and look to even bigger systems outside the region as much as to the villages; funding and policy are not set at the village level. Although local people rarely used the language of self-determination and sovereignty, there were signs of resistance to allowing outsiders sole control over service delivery.

Issues of concern in the village became Problems only when systems and service providers from Bethel were actively involved. The professionals from outside the community had more authority and willingness to compel compliance. Those systems were called on only in times of perceived crisis, when there was immediate threat of harm or when community members had depleted their own resources in addressing a situation; this may hint at a desire to keep outsiders away and respond locally. Standing in a murky middle ground, the school social worker was more often on site and involved in less acute cases but also had less authority.

Crucially, the distinction here is not a racial/ethnic one, nor one of tribes in relation to the state, but rather of the village in relation to organizations in Bethel. As not all Yup'ik villages – independent tribes – have chosen to join the Yupiit Nation movement with its goal of a tribal Confederation (Kasayulie, 1992), so, perhaps, not all find the regional organizations to provide enough latitude for the most local level of control. I can only speculate that geography affects this perception as much as communities' sense of affiliation, but it does seem that the *village* is a more meaningful unit for control over service provision than has been widely recognized.

I would like to think I have given Unegkumuit community members an additional mechanism for speaking; I know of no other research that has solicited the thoughts of Native service providers and clients in this way. Yet, the task of the analysis was not merely to amplify voices but to rise above the minutiae of the fieldnotes and transcripts – *these* people and *these* lives – and identify issues pertinent to a broader audience; I hope I also have identified messages and patterns that the participants in this project were not (consciously) aware of. The people of Unegkumuit were involved in their daily lives, personally and at work. They were incredibly helpful and interested in my work, but examining the big picture was not work they wanted to engage in in any sustained way. I cannot take sole credit for the insights gained through this project, but I do take credit for moving those insights beyond the level of individual or dyadic rumination.

Methods: Analysis

As discussed in the introduction, ethnographic research is not intended to be verified or generalized as straightforwardly as survey research. But by explaining in as fine detail as I can how I moved from the data through the analysis, I hope the logic of my thought will lend plausibility to and confidence in my conclusions.

Coding

I started coding data while still engaged in fieldwork. Given my questions and theoretical interests, I already had a trellis, a mental shape of the analysis that would lend structure to the coding without predetermining how the coding scheme would grow. I knew which very broad categories (“root” codes) I was interested in: given my heightened sensitivity to language issues, I had a “language” category; given my interest in cases and in actors and their roles, I had a “people” category; and given my initial questions, I had a “social issues” category with the sub-categories (“branch” codes) “issues,” “responses,” and “challenges.” Indeed, the data – my descriptions of what I noticed every day, transcriptions of interviews where I usually directed the conversation – were pre-coded to the extent that I was increasingly alert to certain kinds of events and interactions even before writing about them.

Beyond general codes, however, I borrowed “open coding” and “constant comparison” techniques from grounded theory sociologists (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;

Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).⁶⁹ Open coding refers to a process of selecting items from the data and naming and categorizing them. While still in the field, I reread my fieldnotes regularly. I did not have the interview transcripts until I returned to the university; however, I listened to the interview tapes and took additional notes while dubbing them. (I sent the originals to the transcriber and kept the back-ups.) From these reviews of my notes and interviews, I developed a much more detailed initial coding scheme grounded in the data although not yet “attached” to specific units of text.

Once back at the university, I used NUDIST software to create an electronic version of the coding scheme – reviewing my existing codes and creating new ones – as I coded actual data.⁷⁰ I chose paragraphs as my text units, both to provide some context for the particular phenomena of interest and because of constraints imposed by the software.⁷¹ As I had in the village but now more intensively, I went through and asked of each paragraph, who is present here, either participating directly in the scene or mentioned by someone; what village English or Yup’ik words or phrases

⁶⁹ I originally thought of the study as a grounded theory study and wrote my grant proposal and dissertation prospectus in these terms. However, the analytic process detailed by Strauss & Corbin (1990) – while comfortingly concrete for a novice! – proved too limiting and inflexible; and Glaser’s (1978; 1992) purist stance around all categories having to be explicit in the data was not amenable to an interest in how tacit issues are intertwined with issues identified by informants.

⁷⁰ The software did not code or otherwise do the work of data analysis for me; rather it functioned as an electronic data management tool that facilitated “tidying up” the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and let me avoid having piles of notecards spread around my living room.

⁷¹ My version of NUDIST allows the analyst to select one of three types of text units – lines, sentences, or paragraphs. Lines had no inherent meaning and in fact were likely to break up discursive meaning units. Sentences were disqualified since I wasn’t using standard punctuation in my transcripts. This left me with paragraphs, which in some cases were longer than necessary but not unduly so. As part of “cleaning the data” (preparing it for importation into the software), I broke up the longest paragraphs.

stand out as “rich points” (Agar, 1994; see below); what issues and interventions are under consideration/occurring/being described, and what do people think about them? What else is going on here that seems remotely connected to a case or to social services? With each element of a paragraph that seemed somehow salient, I “constantly compared” it to the codes I already had: did this fit into an existing category or did it require a new one? Was it alike enough to its fellows in a code to warrant the same placement but different enough that the code itself required refining into another, more differentiated layer? By the time I had reviewed all my fieldnotes and transcripts,⁷² each paragraph had multiple codes attached to it such that when I inverted the process, each code had the fullest possible set of relevant text units.

I also had a set of “free codes.” Some were phenomena explicit in the data which were not linked to other codes but which I thought might prove pertinent later, either to the dissertation or to other, later papers I was beginning to consider. Some free codes were examples of broader, more inferential phenomena of interest which I wanted for now to keep apart from the concrete material.

I printed the data for each “social issues” branch-code and perused them. Throughout the analysis, I further refined the coding scheme, collapsing together codes that had little data, separating out codes whose data divided into still smaller groups. At times I decided that the most salient feature of the data at a given sub-

⁷² Although I drew on my diary notes to flavor writing the descriptive ethnography in the last chapter, I did not formally code them for this section. Likewise, I reviewed selected external

code was pertinent to another code, and I either copied the entire branch to another, larger branch or moved it entirely. Sometimes a given code proved redundant and I merged the data into more useful codes and deleted the first. (This process approximated Strauss & Corbin's [1990] "axial coding" stage although I did not follow their strict line of questioning.)

Narratives

Although these social issues codes were not person-specific, two cases were mentioned much more frequently, and in more numerous contexts, than others. I went back and printed the codes for the two individuals – whom I call "Walter" and "Natalie" – at the heart of those cases and cleaned up the related data to create narratives of how those cases evolved. I created two narratives for each. One I organized chronologically within the fieldwork period, such that some events that occurred before the fieldwork are inscribed in the middle of the narrative. I wanted at this point to retain my own presence: the sequence of events as I learned of them, what I thought as I gained additional information, and how I followed up. With these narratives, I created a timeline of both cases to see how they may have influenced each other – many of the same people were responding to both and had to juggle their priorities and time – and eventually rewrote the narratives chronologically by event. I took myself out of the second drafts for the protection of some informants. Although the omniscient voice is politically questionable, as

documents and added comments about them to my fieldnotes for context, but did not code them either.

discussed in chapter 1, in the earlier drafts of the narratives, often it is evident who provided me what information, and I wanted to minimize that phenomenon.

I analyzed the later narratives to trace in fine detail how sequences of moves developed, how different players in the dramas reacted to situations and to each other, and how different issues and responses were foregrounded and backgrounded. Narrative analysis typically focuses on how the narratives themselves are structured and/or how informants display themselves or their cultures through their group or personal stories (e.g., Basso, 1990; Labov, 1999; Linde, 1993; O'Neil, 1996). The narratives are assumed to come from the participants. Here, I constructed the narratives based on multiple reports and observation; the accounts are ordered in a way that made sense to me given my research goals (and no doubt influenced by my own social work practice experience writing case summaries, though this was a very different genre). However, the goal was similar: to think about the whole story and its internal coherence, to see how the pieces fit together – in contrast to “breaking down the data” as in grounded theory-inspired coding.

I used the stories of Walter and Natalie to guide which of the many coded issues and themes to focus on. Quite different in some ways, the cases shared some key features and illustrated how similar issues could provoke different responses (or different sequences of responses), under different circumstances, from the same people. I returned to the social issues data and selected out the issues which were pertinent for Walter and Natalie, and explored how else they had arisen and the responses they evoked, when centered around other people. It was in “sitting with”

the narratives and the related data – reading them, chewing on ideas and rereading them through the lenses of those ideas – that the typology of responses to “remarkable behavior” emerged.⁷³

All this happened before my return trip to the village. While I was back in the community for a week a year later, I explained the early typology to some key informants; they agreed it resonated with their experiences. Back at the university again, then, I proceeded to explore the data specifically in terms of developing the typology. At first I was trying to categorize behaviors or issues and saw the direction of the categories as increasing in perceived severity. However, I realized as I progressed that the issues often shifted among categories – which shouldn’t have happened, at least not so frequently. Thinking about these “negative examples” of behavior types, and using them as checks on how my developing generalizations didn’t quite fit the data, I realized that what I had actually effected were categories clustered by types of responses. Once I appreciated what I had done instinctively, I could rethink the ongoing analysis and concentrate on the data coded at the “interventions/responses” branch of the coding scheme. Again I paid particular attention to the responses present in the narratives of Walter and Natalie. Their cases were dramatic enough, however, that their responses tended to the more direct end of the typology, such that I scrutinized other coded data for examples of the less direct kinds of responses as well.

⁷³ See Peirce (1940; 1957) on “abduction,” the reasoning process distinct from deduction and induction – but not mere chance – through which one infers from cases and accepted knowledge to

When it came time to write up the analysis, I merged elements of not only Walter's and Natalie's but also several other cases into one composite case study of "Nate," which formed the starting point for this chapter. Again, I constructed the narrative, and my goal now was not "only" to make disparate bits of data coherent but to dramatize specific issues of interest; I chose to include events for illustrative value. I believe the case is plausible, i.e., I did not load unlikely, or more, problematic behavior onto "Nate" than was credible for the community that fall. My other goal in creating the case of Nate was to disguise identities. Although no event described is fictional, the details are changed and the incidents are mixed up so that even if an informant or "character" recognizes him/herself, s/he will not learn more about another individual than s/he already knows.⁷⁴

Rich points

I also drew on other forms of discourse analysis in a very modest way. Discourse analysis – the phrase being an umbrella term for a variety of specific techniques – takes language as its object of analysis rather than assuming it to be a transparent tool for communication. Here, I used limited discourse analysis to orient me to language as itself something that requires attention. As discussed in chapter 3, there are translation issues not only between Yup'ik and English but between village English and standard English. In particular, I drew on Agar's (1994) discussion of "rich points" (cf. Leigh, 1998, on "cover terms") to point me to

create hypotheses (cf. Anderson, 1986; Hintikka, 1998).

words whose meaning could not be captured by simple definitions, those words of which I could say, “It looked central, slippery, and interesting, and I had no idea what it really meant” (Agar, 1994, p. 100). Indeed, a rich point identified by Morrow (1993) serves as the organizing framework for the discussion/conclusion chapter.

⁷⁴ The narratives of “Walter” and “Natalie” would have been identifiable to some Unegkumuit community members; thus, once I was confident their analytic use had been exploited, I destroyed the narratives.

Chapter Six: “Letting” people change their behavior

In this final chapter, I think about directions in which social work could move in the YK Delta and rural Alaska. My goal is less to reach firm conclusions and recommendations – the Yup’ik and other Alaska Natives do not need another over-educated kuss’aq telling them what to do – than to map out areas that warrant more deliberation by those who design, provide, and receive services.

The title of this chapter draws on the village English word “let,” a word which, as mentioned earlier, covers a range of meaning from “allow” to “persuade” to “compel.” The data suggest that *helping* in rural Alaska largely consists of assisting people in behaving in ways judged as unremarkable - in ways that conform enough to local expectations that others are not troubled/concerned/worried - and that many kinds of direct and indirect action may be taken to encourage accordance. Thus, a central concern of helping, and therefore of social work as a component in the helping system, is captured by this word, with all its levels of suasion.

“Let” highlights the social nature of individual behavior, which is particularly salient for a people who continue to stress relationship as a core value. Even traditional childrearing and adult interaction, which emphasized non-interference and naturally occurring self-correction to the violation of norms, implied a benign surveillance. Others were aware of someone’s behavior and had

opinions about it even if they did nothing – i.e., even if they “let” the individual figure out him/herself how to improve as ihuma increased. And though traditionally, and still today, people have preferred indirectness when a more active response is required, it is other people in the individual’s family and community who assume agency in deciding whether and how to act, and their responses that help shape the changes made by the individual. Formal service systems become involved as the helping – the letting change – includes increased pressure, perhaps compulsion.

It is the management of the responses to Worrisome and Problem behaviors that is of most concern here, for those situations where purely informal strategies of letting people change are effective do not require social work interventions. I will address two main areas related to responding to these behaviors: power and ultimately sovereignty as they are enacted in decision making about services, and the shape of hybrid services at the village level. These areas overlap, for even as contemporary services are (at least, can be) formed by both local and professional cultures, so power is distributed between local and professional systems. The challenge lies in allocating authority and designing services in ways that Alaska Natives can not only live with but thrive under.

Negotiating the Worrisome-Problem line: Negotiating power

There is a lot of talk about sovereignty, and the talk has become very stale.

It is mostly about whether the United States or Canada will “allow”

Indigenous peoples to control their own lands, lives, and destinies....

Ultimately, the lesson is that we, as Indigenous peoples, must start within. We must exercise internal sovereignty, which is nothing more than taking control of our personal lives, our families, our clans, and our communities, writes the chief justice of the Navajo Nation (Yazzie, 2000, p. 46-7). Accordingly, I suggest that a key issue facing Yup'iks and other Alaska Natives is how to fulfill sovereignty goals in the context of social services. At stake are not only the lives and well-being of individuals and families but self-determination for the tribal and ethnic self.

Currently, professional involvement in "letting people change" seems to occur primarily during crises and frequently results in the departure from the village of the individual, especially of the youth, whose behavior has crossed the line into the Problem category. (I will comment more below on the school social worker role as an exception to this generalization.) This situation in some ways works for local people, allowing them to see certain goals met without having to be the agents of their occurrence. It is important to acknowledge that within the constraints of the current system, local purposes are served, at least some of the time. Otherwise it is too easy to accept negative evaluations of clients, made from a narrow, professional perspective, for example: "With some *highly resistant and dysfunctional [Native] families*, it is necessary for a major crisis or the threat of court intervention to occur before they are willing to cooperate even marginally with therapeutic efforts" (Schacht et al., 1989, p. 32, my emphasis). While I do not dismiss the presence of "resistant" and "dysfunctional" families in the YK Delta, what I find are attempts to

manage problematic behavior internally and along traditional lines, and when outside helpers come in, their participation, too, is managed strategically so that local people need not act in ways contrary to cultural norms. To the extent that professional efforts are rebuffed early on in a case (and of course some cases are sufficiently addressed by these local efforts such that formal services never get involved), it is arguably colonization as much as clinical intervention that is being resisted.⁷⁵

Still, the current relationship between community and external service providers must be considered far from satisfactory. The instrumental goal of local people that it serves – getting some individuals away from the community and into “treatment” settings (including via the western legal system) – is borne of frustration; the ideas and energies of family and community members have been depleted, and services provided in the village have not accomplished change either. And even if the origins of this goal were more benign, activating those outside services often perpetuates the historical practice of removing (especially young) Native people from their communities. (Despite the contemporary positive evaluation of boarding schools, the attendance of Alaska Native youth was usually involuntary early on.) Furthermore, although people’s leaving the village can be voluntary, at least to some degree, under the current arrangement, much of the

⁷⁵ I cannot resist commenting on language use here, in this case, my own. I am aware that I have written most of this paragraph in the passive voice – but given my topic, that people are negotiating events without quite being agents of their occurrence, passive voice is exactly what I want. If I were writing in a language that required me to use the active voice, the flavor of the paragraph would be

power remains with those external systems, perhaps with the state – the same state that tribal organizations such as the Yupiit Nation are resisting.

“In Alaska, situations almost always involve some degree of cooperation, but state and federal agencies retain the bulk of the power” (Hensel & Morrow, 1998, p. 71). Originally that statement was made about the co-management of fisheries, but it applies to domains such as social services as well. Sovereignty comes to the forefront of thinking about social work, at both a broad political and interpersonal levels.

Within a framework of concurrent jurisdiction or co-management, the issue is in large part about who finally has discretion, or who has veto power. Covert (passive voice) management of fuzzy boundaries, such as that between the Worrisome and Problem categories of behavior, may be culturally congruent and adequately functional for achieving local goals – when those goals more or less match what the external systems can accomplish. But when they don't? There is never any guarantee the external service providers will act as local people want them to in a given situation, yet once outsiders have the authority, it may be difficult for local people to regain it. I think of Ethan's satisfaction with the state child welfare system being the one to remove maltreated children from their homes – i.e., instead of him. When he concurs that removal is necessary, he need not be the person seen to make such a decision about his neighbors. But if he doesn't concur,

wrong. I insert this footnote because it illustrates the loss that occurs when languages die: although we can say things in English and other world languages, we lose the flavor of the original.

his and the village's only option is to request that jurisdiction over the case be transferred to the tribe, an outcome which cannot be taken for granted. With Ethan specifically, the situation has so far been only hypothetical as no children have been removed during his tenure as ICWA Worker, though already some people resent his connection to DFYS. But the situation illustrates the point.

Indirectness remains a communicative norm for the Yup'ik, and certainly things can be accomplished indirectly; but perhaps self-determination and sovereignty are better promoted by taking overt responsibility and making positive statements about what should happen in a given situation? I am reminded of Nate's parents' approach to his assessment and about the Traditional Council's "wanting" the school to arrange for the boys now at the Group Home to be placed somewhere. Directness and concomitant accountability are socially difficult, especially among Native people in very small communities.⁷⁶ Yet, leaving the difficult decisions to others seems to me to be strategically risky.

⁷⁶ Two potentially parallel postcolonial situations suggest this phenomenon is not unique to Yup'iks or Alaska Natives. From Australia, Bern (2003) reports on the challenges of intervening with gas sniffing. The town that was his research site sounds much like a large Native village; it is home to about 900 Aboriginals who have a long history with each other and the place and to about 60 non-Aboriginals who are new and temporary, with a local government that sounds functionally like the Unegkumuit Traditional Council. He says people are trying to take collective action to respond to huffing but seem reluctant to accept direct responsibility for their efforts. And in arctic Canada, Condon (1992) has traced evolving modes of social control, especially regarding violent acts, and the increasing reliance on southern jurisprudence. His interpretations are more cynical than mine (or, again, maybe his Inuit research site is that different from rural Alaska), and he sees traditional forms of conflict management eroding rather than being attempted and in some cases being seen as inadequate. However, his conclusion is suggestive given my current discussion: the recently established Mounties detachment "allows many community residents the luxury of espousing traditional values of forgiveness and forgetting even as they rely increasingly on outside law enforcement agencies" (p. 47).

The dilemma might be expressed this way: are people willing to act “less Yup’ik” in selected ways if it might ultimately foster local control? I have addressed precedent for such an approach across a variety of domains. For example, some people have accepted the Fish & Game model of counting animals in order to protect subsistence (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch. 8) and are co-managing fisheries (Hensel & Morrow, 1998) despite a morally questionable link between animals and cash. Inuit women with “female consciousness” have acted in ways more assertive than was traditional for them, in order to support their traditional caretaking roles (G. D. Reimer, 1996). At a more general level, “tribes have become far more sophisticated in wielding political power” (Indian tribes..., p. 17), one legal reference book for American Indian lawyers says cheerfully. Unfortunately they have had to become “sophisticated” on western terms in the western system, and it has been mostly younger people who have achieved some mastery over western systems, thereby creating some disjuncture between local moral authority and externally-oriented roles and responsibilities. Nonetheless, increased political power, as with ICWA, creates space for increased local control over social work-related issues and behaviors.

Hybrid service systems

A Native (Inuit) Greenlander has reflected on colonial governance in Greenland and notes that well-intentioned Danish civil servants feared “things would collapse” if they deserted their roles – which perhaps was a real concern but effectively justified colonization and “would create a people who had lost belief in

their own capacity. It would create a people who were thankful to be colonized” (Petersen, 1995, p. 122).

This statement suggests that even if power cannot be returned wholesale to Native people, in order to forestall “gratitude for colonization,” social services at least should be designed to be “indigenous.” At the same time, Native scholars have argued that remembering, constructing, and using indigenous knowledge is a form of self-determination (Hill, n.d.). To believe that indigenous knowledge – an essentialist construct – warrants support is politically and ethically desirable, yet pragmatically unhelpful in a hybrid social context. What does it mean to promote indigenous knowledge in the realm of social services? Nowadays, there are limits to the effectiveness of traditional means of social control; the Problem category exists in the typology because traditional forms of letting people change are no longer enough. And social services in the U.S. are shaped by state and organizational policies formed far from Alaska Native villages. How do we take advantage of indigenous knowledge within those constraints?

Meanwhile, efforts to make social work more culturally appropriate entail risk. Orientalist-style “Native” preferences for interventions may become reified, even codified, such that as people and practices change, or as new situations arise, the rulemaking systems are stuck. I recounted earlier the subsistence example about the muskox and the boys being fined for harvesting it out of season despite responding in a culturally appropriate manner (Morrow & Hensel, 1992). Analogous to the translation issues between standard and village English, where

speakers of standard English fail to appreciate the elasticity of meaning of some village English words, kuss'aq service providers and program designers may interpret too narrowly some indeterminate Yup'ik values and practices (Morrow, 1990).

This kind of well-intentioned misfire may have occurred already with the Wraparound project. Again, I stress that this research is no way an evaluation of Wraparound. But I wonder if perhaps the inclusion of paid Elders in the service teams for specific catchment areas, while an admirable attempt to be culturally competent, is also an example of reifying a practice without fully accounting for subtleties – or geography. In the one Unegkumuit case in which service providers, trained in the model, tried to create a Wraparound team (partially woven into the story of “Nate”), three official and seemingly necessary team members – the clinician I have called Terence, the family advocate, and the Elder – all lived in other villages. The insights and participation of Elders are valued in Unegkumuit, but I think emphasis is less on the abstract category “Elder” than on the individuals who know and are the biological and fictive kin of many members of *that* community. As I understand the design of the YK Delta project, the role has been privileged over the relationships – which is a typically western way of thinking. (Or else administrative convenience has been privileged, which again is not so much a criticism as recognition of how external regulations shape services and that we must be very mindful of this constraint in our program designs. As I understand it, staff laudably want to pay Elders – after all, the clinicians are paid, quite well – but doing

so requires having a few people on the payroll rather than inclusive invitations being extended in each community for each case.)

And yet, reinforcing Fienup-Riordan's (2000, ch. 3-4) claim that hybridity in the form of "metaphorical incorporation" is an identifiably Yup'ik mode of interpretation, what people from Unegkumuit and other villages said at the Wraparound training was that "this is what we've always done, now they gave it a name." The core principles of the model, summarized as the Wraparound equation "strengths + team + needs + plan + unconditional care = wraparound" (Kipp & Baez, 2001), resonated with the cultural principles which training participants thought were salient for social services. At least upon first exposure, people glossed over the elements that fit less easily with their perceptions of their culture, such as the formal role of Elders, and the necessity of some degree of professional participation (the program is predicated on Medicaid funding, once the current grant expires, and thus relies on individual-level mental health diagnoses).

What I find exciting about the idea of metaphorical incorporation and hybrid service systems is the recognition of unequal but bidirectional change. Colonial power relationships are not neutralized. But unlike the very one-way analysis of power and influence (and blame) still typical of so many helping professionals (e.g. Sullivan & Brems, 1997), and as illustrated with the Yup'ik and Christianity, a western system can be changed and made local.

However, it is one thing to map the formation of Yup'ik Christianity retrospectively as an apparently organic process, another to prospectively design

service models that are easily “incorporated.” Hybridity is more easily recognized after the fact than useful as a tool, or even a blueprint.

Directions to explore

Local ownership and concrete planning

Whether through Wraparound or another mechanism, perhaps the developing Child Protection Team (CPT), it seems worth considering a community body that directly talks about and even makes specific plans regarding individuals whose behavior reaches the Worrisome category. Such a group could respond to some of the concerns I have raised regarding the Worrisome-Problem line. Once behavior has elicited a directed Talking To response (or even before), service providers are already likely to be talking among themselves. Including in such discussions the rest of the CPT, or some other group membership, requires some thinking around confidentiality, but it could be at this point in the life a case – before it develops into a crisis – that people can best specify arrangements for which they can be held mutually accountable. A gathering designated as a meeting might make it seem more serious than a simple chat or gossip. Within the structure of this body, with its echoes of the *qasgiq*, participants – Worried people, hopefully including family members and the index individual if old enough – could state opinions and even negotiate tasks that involve applying pressure on people to behave in less problematic ways. Recall that Elders have to some degree endorsed assertiveness when they characterize good (contemporary) leaders as having an ability to speak out (Fienup-Riordan, 1990, ch.9).

Various local formal and informal parties who talk to parents, youth, or children could coordinate enough not to be perceived as overwhelming or unduly intrusive (recall Nate's complaint and Elders' warnings about kumayak), and enough that the involvement of external bureaucracies need not be only a function of emergencies. For a goal would be to avoid the need to *let* outsiders take over and usurp "the seat by the qasgiq door." Professionals from outside the village need not be excluded from the process, but it would be the community team that had the authority to invite them and set parameters for their participation. The community team would be the street level bureaucrats implementing this most local level of policy.

The problem of direct action and accountability being socially difficult might be mitigated by the group structure. In her article on Yup'ik indeterminacy, Morrow (1990) writes, "the village of Chevak always has two designated elders, so that neither can be held responsible for a given decision. Blame and credit are distributed across individuals. This not only mutes conflict, but also serves as a positive recognition of interdependence and collective strength" (p. 154). Also, she suggests that there are appropriate times for specificity, and this could be one of them: "[s]pecification...makes things happen, as in the power of words to actualize events. Specific forms are used when social and spiritual relationships are out of balance" (p. 155). Assertions and plans to help shape unbalanced behavior – and ihuma – could actually be characterized as traditional. And even if specificity is

still considered culturally less preferable, it still may be important as almost inevitably, it will be Natives who suffer when misunderstandings occur.

I do not know how flexible the Wraparound model is; I do not know whether all team members including the professional clinicians and paraprofessional Wellness Counselors must be present at team meetings, or conversely, whether those service providers may work with families and communities when a formal diagnosis has not been established. If the model is as fixed as it seemed at the training, then I would discourage systems designers from turning immediately to Wraparound to experiment with the kind of community groups I am suggesting. Wraparound is grounded in mental health (Burchard & Burchard, 2000), and given that other kinds of concerns seem more prominent at the village level, and that “mental health” is not the most relevant of constructs in villages anyway (Minton & Soule, 1990), a more expansive kind of meeting not contingent on diagnoses could be worth considering. Indeed, there is little distinction made at the village level between helping and the less voluntary measures of social control which western systems have given to the criminal justice system (“‘letting’ people change” encompasses it all) such that an inclusive model seems paramount (cf. Ross, 2000).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ One potential alternative is the Family Group Conference (FGC), a formalized adaptation of the traditional Maori (the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) problem-resolution model. FGCs are grounded in the Maori idea of family, an expansive idea comprised of layers of biological kin and community/tribe. In their pure form, FGCs consist of a wide range of family members and professionals/service providers gathering for sharing information about concerns, followed by “family-alone time” during which the family plans how to address the concerns. Legislatively mandated in 1989 for all New Zealand youth and families involved with the child welfare and

The CPT has already expressed an intention to form tribal case plans, suggesting there is a nascent vision of community intervention already. Whatever the form, community ownership of responses to behavior increases the chances of not only cultural competence but control and power over services.

School social worker

Like the roles of the village-based paraprofessionals, Yup'ik community members working in social service systems mostly designed elsewhere, the role of the school social worker in some Yup'ik villages (the school district which employs them does not encompass the entire YK Delta) embodies hybridity. The school social worker position muddies an easy equivalence between ethnicity and authority; typically *kuss'aq*, neither the school social worker nor the district school social work department wants or expects automatic control. Because during the study period the school social worker declined to act as local people expected professionals to act during crises, in my data the worker was somewhat discounted – not an actor with a prominent role in dramatic events, yet not a local person central to the research. Yet, as hinted at in the data, I think the role carries in it the potential for metaphorical incorporation into the local helping system. Here was someone with advanced training who also had a presence in the community apart from emergencies. Rather as this school social worker wanted to act as a consultant to the CPT but not become a figure of dependence, the school social worker – or some

juvenile justice systems, FGCs in New Zealand and now in Canada, the U.K., and the U.S. also are primarily used within child welfare and conflict resolution/restorative justice. So far usually

other itinerant professional responsible for just a few sites - could bridge professional systems and the village. Unfortunately, further exploiting the potential of this role would be very expensive, and staff turnover would undo some of the potential benefits.

Idleness and youth

Much of the dismay so many adults feel regarding undisciplined youth, reinforced by Condon's and Stern's many studies in Canada, revolves around idleness. Young people who excelled on western terms were not the target of concern or change; others approved their displaying the characteristics of *ihuma* – amiability, humor, stability – and keeping themselves occupied and productive *somehow*. But between the paucity of paid-employment opportunities and the diminishing value placed on subsistence for young people (recall Stern's 2000 discussion of subsistence and leisure), many young people (young men) are left without structure to their time.

Condon (1995) found sports and other recreational activities to be important to contemporary youth. Ironically, in YK Delta villages, many such activities are located at the school, and as illustrated by "Nate," some of the youth of most worry are prohibited from the school in the evenings (i.e., for "open gym") or "ineligible" for events sponsored by the school because of poor attendance or grades. In other

suggested by professionals, they emphasize family decision-making (Burford & Hudson, 2000) and the "wraparound equation" components.

words, it may be the youth at most risk who cannot participate in the benign activities that could be protective.

One task for people Troubled/Concerned/Worried about youth, then, might be to help them find constructive things to do. Subsistence activities come to mind immediately, especially for boys. This is not a new idea; for example, the Wellness Counselor took one boy out hunting and considered taking another until the latter displayed too great a sense of entitlement to equipment. Here the community meeting and planning mechanism could again prove fruitful, for more adults working together – in consultation with the youth himself! – might overcome that kind of subtle resistance and add to the mix of material and emotional resources. And the group might add to the direct or indirect pressure to participate for the young people who are too “lazy.”

Encouraging subsistence engagement is no panacea, and particularly for boys for whom hunting is more a fun adventure than a moral endeavor, there is no guarantee their overall behavior will change. Nor would I expect subsistence to be the only activity of importance for young men. However, subsistence is appealing for two related cultural reasons: first, it enhances the likelihood of intergenerational contact, potentially facilitating Elder counseling as part of the local intervention, which might help also. Second, “cultural continuity” has been explicitly identified as protective against suicide in British Columbia (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998) and implicitly so in the YK Delta (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, ch.1, in conjunction with Marshall, 1999). Until the mechanism for how culture protects against self-harm is

better understood, it can't hurt to work on the assumption that engaging in a traditional activity with local adults is in itself protective.

The emphasis on local activities is not meant to preclude trips out of the village (such as school-sponsored job training, which might enhance employability) or participation in other activities, at the school or elsewhere. Whatever the content of the activities, pressuring people to engage in them, though culturally distasteful, may prevent the need for outsiders to pressure the same people to leave the community if/when the situation escalates into a crisis. Responses that local people can engage in prior to crises will increase self-determination and local control.

There needs to be some kind of community consensus when the Worrisome-Problem line is crossed, else the person who crosses it (a responder to someone else's behavior) may become the target of community response. For example, in arctic Canada, "an abused woman will garner support only so long as her reaction does not disrupt the family unit. Severe criticism – often in the form of gossip and withdrawal of support – results if a wife decides to press charges that may result in the husband's incarceration outside the community" (G. D. Reimer, 1996, p. 87). That some situations must be handled in the community lest there be other repercussions, further emphasizes the importance of very local efforts to let people change.

Underlying specific problematic behaviors is the reality of rapid socio-cultural change. Cultural change, globally or some aspect of it, was identified as "the main problem facing the village" by several of my informants, including but by

no means limited to Elders. “However, rapid social change is not a useful explanation when the design of effective prevention [or intervention] programs is the desired outcome” (Forbes & Van der hyde, 1988, p. 53). What is the role of social services here? Social work’s mandate in Alaska is to address specific, “residual” problems, yet if cultural change is at the heart of them, perhaps social work should address cultural change more directly. What would this look like? I cannot say.

Conclusion

Rural Alaska Native villages are among the most remote communities in the nation, complicating issues of social service provision already made complex by cultural interpenetration. For the Yup’ik, isolation has facilitated the relative preservation of their traditional culture, for consistent contact with outsiders came later and remains somewhat less intense than for many Native American groups. Nonetheless, a history of colonization has quickened the pace of change for the Yup’ik, and ongoing status as indigenous people in a white-settler nation means that Yup’iks must struggle for sovereignty. They continue to do so and have achieved increased authority and jurisdiction in various domains, but there is room for Yup’ik individuals and communities to assume even more control over the well-being of the tribes and tribal members.

At the same time, Yup’ik and kuss’aq program designers still search for the perfect balance between village-based and itinerant, paraprofessional and professional, Native and kuss’aq social service provision. I believe everyone

concerned to be genuinely invested in delivering the best services possible; how to do so remains elusive. Kuss' aqs must neither make the decisions about what to do nor use empowerment as an excuse to abdicate responsibility to help people who have been historically underserved. But what constitutes help – and how, when, and from whom it is most usefully provided – is ripe for reconsideration.

“To represent Africa is to enter into the battle over Africa...” (Said, 1993, p. 168). I have entered the battle over Alaska. I am a white settler and as such am formed by the dominant culture. But I am heartened by Spivak's (Spivak & Gunew, 1990) admonition to go ahead and engage, for I do not want to support institutions which perpetuate status quo social relations. My role in creating new, Native social work practice models and institutions will be very limited; for them to be authentic to any degree, they must be developed by Native people, who can choose themselves what the hybrid systems will look like. But in my research I can allow the “mediations of meaning and the interactions of interpretations” to be the object of my study (Robinson, 1994, p. 220). I can look for gaps in the discourse and wedge them wider so that others' voices may be heard; I can make some of the dilemmas and challenges more explicit, and prod people to discuss them; perhaps I can contribute to local people's forming and experimenting with their own ideas. Connecting and sharing ideas with other Fourth World peoples in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand could be very fruitful.

“Their culture has always been and continues to be changing. The question is: Who is in charge?” (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, p. 13). Using the village English

word “let” to organize a discussion of how Yup’ik culture is changing in the arena of helping is no mere wordplay but also a verbal reminder to Native and kuss’aq service providers that intervening entails setting the stage for someone else’s changing their behavior (and attitude). Moving out a level, it also serves as a reminder for kuss’aq social workers and systems people that we cannot change communities but only try to set the stage for them to help themselves in the ways they see as effective and culturally appropriate as possible – which may or may not directly include us.

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Appendix A: List of acronyms

AFN – Alaska Federation of Natives

ANCSA – Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

ASB – Advisory School Board

API – Alaska Psychiatric Institute

AVCP – Association of Village Council Presidents

ARA – Alaska Reorganization Act

BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs

CHA – Community Health Aide

CPT – Child Protection Team

DFYS – Division of Family & Youth Services

IHS – Indian Health Services

ICWA – Indian Child Welfare Act

IRA – Indian Reorganization Act

LKSD – Lower Kuskokwim School District

NYO – Native Youth Olympics

PCA – Personal Care Attendant

RHS – Rural Human Services

TC – Traditional Council

VAEC – Village Alcohol Education Counselor

VPO – Village Police Officer

VPSO – Village Public Safety Officer

YKHC – Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Appendix B: Consent forms

(These are forms used; others were approved by the IRB but proved unnecessary.)

CONSENT FORM for Social Service Providers
“Social Work Meanings and Practices among the Yup’ik of Southwestern Alaska”

Researcher: Tracey Burke

While I am here in _____, you can reach me at _____’s house.

For after I leave the village, the phone number at my school is 206-221-7441.

Investigator’s Statement

Maybe you remember when I used to come here as a social worker to work with kids and families for the school. I don’t work for the school anymore. Now I am a graduate student doing research on how social services work in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and I am asking you to participate in the study. This form is to tell you about the study so you can decide if you want to be part of it. I will read through the form with you, and you can ask me any questions you have about the project – about the purpose, what I will ask you to do, possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. After we go over the form and answer your questions, you can decide if you want to be part of the research. If you decide to participate, please sign your name at the end. The process is called “informed consent.”

Purpose and Benefits

This is a research project about how Yup’ik social service providers in the villages think your jobs and your culture fit together. I’m also interested in what you and other service providers do in your jobs to make the jobs and culture fit as well as possible. I am *not* trying to say how well you do your job.

This project is part of my schoolwork to help me get my Ph.D., and I will write papers and maybe even a book about what I learn. I think this research is important because right now bosses and teachers in social services talk about making the cultures fit together, but nobody has asked people doing those jobs in the villages yet. I hope the results of the study will help us think of ways to improve social services and social work/social services education programs so the cultures fit better.

Procedures

Would you be interested in helping me with this research? This is what I would ask you to do:

1) *To let me interview you about your job.* Some of my questions will be easy, like about the paperwork you do. Some would be more personal, like how you feel about different things, or asking for stories about your hardest day at work. If it’s okay with you, I will also tape record our conversations. When our conversations are written down from the tapes, you can read what you said and add to it if you want. If sometimes you want to say something in Yup’ik before you say it in English, I will tape what you say in both

languages. Then I will ask someone else in Bethel to re-translate what you say in Yup'ik so I get a good idea what you were thinking about. After the conversations are written down in English, I will erase all the tapes.

2) *To let me watch what you do at work, including when you work with clients.* The research is not about anyone's personal problems, but knowing how you work with your clients will help me think about the cultural issues in your job. At first it might feel weird to have someone watching, but probably this would go away. I will do my best to make it easy for you to ignore me except when I ask questions. I will not ask questions when you are with clients or in other meetings. If you talk with clients in Yup'ik, I will *not* tape-record that.

3) *To look at the notes you take about your clients.* Since usually *kuss'aqs* care more about writing things down than Yup'iks do, I think seeing how you write in your job could tell me things about how the cultures mix in your work.

I will also ask for your clients' permission for the parts about them. You are the only one who knows them right now. To help protect their privacy, I would like you to do one more thing:

4) *Show your clients a letter asking them if it's okay for me to know who they are.* This would be to all adult clients and also kids 12-17 and their parents. The letter explains some things about the research, and asks them for permission for you to tell me their names. If they say yes to you, I will contact them to go over an "informed consent" form kind of like this one. Saying yes to you doesn't mean they have to participate, it just means that they'd like to hear more about it.

I will probably spend a lot of time with you, while you're at work and while you're off-duty too – maybe 15 hours every week that I'm here. Partly to pay you for so much time, and partly as a thank-you for helping me, I will pay you \$250. You will receive this money for your *own* participation. Even if none of your clients wants to participate, you will still get the money. (Since I won't spend so much time with them, I can't pay each client, but I will give the Council \$600 as a thank-you to the whole village.)

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

It may feel weird or uncomfortable or boring to talk about your job so much, or to have someone watch you at work. We can talk about ways to make it feel more okay. Or, as I say below, you can ask me stop.

Other Information

I want to respect your privacy. I will take a lot of notes on what I watch and what we talk about. When I write things down or tape record things, I will not use your real name. That way, the person in Seattle who writes down what you say on the tapes, and the person in Bethel who translates what you say in Yup'ik, won't know it's you. In the papers I write or

the book, I will not use your real name either. I will change some details when I write about you and your work so people can't tell it's you.

Before I write the papers or the book, only a few people will see my notes – mostly the teachers at my school who will help me with the research. They won't know your real name either. Just in case I learn of anything illegal, I have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the federal government. That way, no one can make me talk about your participation in the research to anyone outside the research, including police or the court system. If you ask me to talk about your participation, I will. You are free to talk about your own participation at any time.

The exception to my keeping confidentiality is that I will report it if I suspect a child or dependent adult is being hurt, or if I suspect an adult might hurt himself/herself or someone else.

You don't have to do this. If you want to say no, that's okay. Or if you agree to participate and don't like it, you can take a break or decide to quit. Or if there are particular questions or topics you don't like, you can choose not to discuss them.

Informant's Statement

The study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later I can ask Tracey even after she leaves my village. If I have questions about my rights, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington (206-543-0098). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

informant's signature	date
researcher's signature	date

please check the parts you consent to:

- I give permission for Tracey to interview me about my job.
- I give permission for Tracey to tape-record the interviews.
- I give permission for Tracey to watch me at work, including with clients (with clients' consent).
- I give permission for Tracey to see the notes I take about my clients (with clients' consent).
- I agree to show Tracey's letter to my clients and to give her their names (with clients' consent).

CONSENT FORM for Community Members
“Social Work Meanings and Practices among the Yup’ik of Southwestern Alaska”

Researcher: Tracey Burke

While I am here in Chefnak, you can reach me at the blue trailer by the school, 867-8414. For after I leave the village, the phone number at my university is 206-221-7441.

Investigator’s Statement

Maybe you remember when I used to come here as a social worker to work with kids and families for the school. I don’t work for the school anymore. Now I am a graduate student doing research on how social services work in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and I welcome your participation in the study. This form is to tell you about the study so you can decide if you want to be part of it. I will read through the form with you, and you can ask me any questions you have about the project – about the purpose, what I will ask you to do, possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. After we go over the form and answer your questions, you can decide if you want to be part of the research. If you decide to participate, please sign your name at the end. The process is called “informed consent.”

Purpose and Benefits

This is a research project about how social services in the villages and Yup’ik culture fit together. Mostly I’m interested in the people who have social service jobs – what they think, and what they do in their jobs to make the jobs and culture fit as well as possible. (I am *not* trying to say how well they do their jobs.) I think this research is important because right now bosses and teachers in social services talk about making the cultures fit together, but nobody has asked people doing those jobs in the villages yet. I hope the results of the study will help us think of ways to improve social services and social work education programs so the cultures fit better.

I also am interested in what other people think about social services in the villages. As a member of the community, you have a valuable perspective about problems and ways to solve them. I would appreciate hearing what you think.

This project is part of my schoolwork to help me get my Ph.D., and I will write papers and maybe even a book about what I learn.

Procedures

What I ask of you is to let me interview you. Mostly I will trust you to tell me what is important. I might also ask some questions like, “What do you think is the biggest problem in the village?” and “What do you think needs to be done differently?” and “What do you do when you feel bad?”

If you agree to be interviewed, I’ll tape-record our conversation, if it’s okay with you. If you want to speak in Yup’ik, we can get a translator. I will ask someone else in Bethel to re-

translate what you say in Yup'ik so I get a good idea what you were thinking about. After the conversations are written down in English, I will erase all the tapes. If you feel more private, I won't tape-record, I'll just take notes.

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

You may feel sad talking about problems in the village. I think it will help to know that talking about it may help make things change. Or you may feel uncomfortable talking about what you do when you have problems. If you feel too upset or uncomfortable, you can change your mind about talking with me.

Other Information

I want to respect your privacy. I will take notes on what we talk about. When I write things down or tape record things, I will not use your real name. The Bethel translator will hear your voice and someone in Seattle will write down the English version of what you say, but they won't know it's you. In the papers I write or the book, I will not use your real name. Before I write the papers or the book, only a few people will see my notes – mostly the teachers at my school who will help me with the research.

I will never tell anyone what you talked about with me *except* for three things. The first thing I will tell is if I think a child is being abused or neglected. The second thing is if a dependent adult is being hurt. Third, I will tell if I think you are very suicidal or dangerous. Otherwise, I'll keep everything private. Just in case I learn of anything illegal, I have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the federal government. That way, no one can make me talk about my research notes to anyone outside the research, including police or the court system.

You don't have to do this. If you want to say no, that's okay. Or if you agree to help and it feels uncomfortable part way through, you can take a break or change your mind. I can't pay you anything for your help, but I will pay the Traditional Council as a Thank You to the whole village for helping me.

Informant's Statement

The study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later I can ask Tracey even after she leaves my village. If I have questions about my rights, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington (206-543-0098). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ informant's signature

_____ date

_____ researcher's signature

_____ date

_____ I give Tracey permission to interview me.

_____ I give permission for Tracey to tape-record the interview(s).

CONSENT FORM for social service clients
“Social Work Meanings and Practices among the Yup’ik of Southwestern Alaska”

Researcher: Tracey Burke

While I am here in _____, you can reach me at _____’s house.

For after I leave the village, the phone number at my school is 206-221-7441.

Investigator’s Statement

Maybe you remember when I used to come here as a social worker to work with kids and families for the school. I don’t work for the school anymore. Now I am a graduate student doing research on how social services work in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and I am asking you to participate in the study. This form is to tell you about the study so you can decide if you want to be part of it. I will read through the form with you, and you can ask me any questions you have about the project – about the purpose, what I will ask you to do, possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. After we go over the form and answer your questions, you can decide if you want to be part of the research. If you decide to participate, please sign your name at the end. The process is called “informed consent.”

Purpose and Benefits

This is a research project about how social services in the villages and Yup’ik culture fit together. Mostly I’m interested in the people who have social service jobs – what they think, and what they do in their jobs to make the jobs and culture fit as well as possible. (I am *not* trying to say how well they do their jobs.) I think this research is important because right now bosses and teachers in social services talk about making the cultures fit together, but nobody has asked people doing those jobs in the villages yet. I hope the results of the study will help us think of ways to improve social services and social work education programs so the cultures fit better.

This project is part of my schoolwork to help me get my Ph.D., and I will write papers and maybe even a book about what I learn.

Procedures

You are a client working with one of the local social service providers. This is what I would ask you do:

1) *To let me watch when you work with the service provider.* The research is not about your personal problems, but knowing how the service provider works with you will help me think about the cultural issues in her/his job. At first it might feel uncomfortable or weird to have someone watching, but probably this would go away. I will do my best to make it easy for you to ignore me. For example, during a session, I won’t tape-record, or write down notes, or say anything. It’s important to me that you feel okay about it. If it feels too weird, you can always change your mind in the middle and I will leave.

If your conversation with the service provider is in Yup'ik, I'll watch quietly and ask the provider to tell me about it later. You can tell me about it too if you want to, but that's up to you. I won't ask you first.

2) *To let me look at the notes the service provider writes about you.* Since usually *kuss'ags* care more about writing things down than Yup'iks do, I think seeing how the service provider writes down things about the job could tell me things about how the cultures mix. I'm not interested in *what* anyone says about you; I'm interested in *how* they say it.

There's another way you can be part of the study if you want to, but this part is extra. It is:

3) *To come back to me and be interviewed about what it's like for you to be a client.* It would be really interesting to me to talk with you after I watch you and the service provider – but I'll leave that up to you. You can come to me to talk, but I won't ask you about it if you don't come to me. If you do come to me, I would ask questions like, “Is what happened today the way it usually goes?” and “Can you tell me about why you started working with the provider?” and “How have things changed with that situation since you started working together?” I will not be a social worker with you; I will be a researcher.

If you do come for an interview, I'll tape-record our conversation, if it's okay with you. When our conversations are written down from the tapes, you can read what you said and add to it if you want. If sometimes you want to say something in Yup'ik before you say it in English, I will tape what you say in both languages. Then I will ask someone else in Bethel to re-translate what you say in Yup'ik so I get a good idea what you were thinking about. After the conversations are written down in English, I will erase all the tapes. If you feel more private, I won't tape-record, I'll just take notes.

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

It may feel weird or uncomfortable to have someone watch you with the service provider. If you decide to talk with me afterwards, it may make you feel sad to talk about hard things in your life that made you need the services. We can talk about ways to make it feel more okay. Or, as I say below, you don't have to participate.

Other Information

I want to respect your privacy. I will take a lot of notes on what I watch and what we talk about. When I write things down or tape record things, I will not use your real name. Someone in Seattle will write down what's on the tapes, but that person won't know it's you. If you say things in Yup'ik, the Bethel translator won't know it's you either.

After I get back to Seattle and think about what I watched and what it means, I will make new notes about the cultural parts and destroy the notes about you and the service provider. In the papers I write or the book, I will not talk about you personally at all. I may talk about clients in general and maybe I will make up some examples, but I will write it so no one knows you were one of the clients I watched.

Before I write the papers or the book, only a few people will see my notes – mostly the teachers at my school who will help me with the research. They won't know your real name either.

I will never tell anyone what you talked about with the service provider or with me *except* for three things. The first thing I would tell is if I think there's child abuse or neglect going on. The second thing is if I think a dependent adult is being hurt. Third, I would tell if I think you are suicidal or dangerous to someone else. Probably those things won't come up, but you need to know I won't keep private what you say about those things. Otherwise, I'll keep everything private. Just in case I learn of anything illegal, I have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the federal government. That way, no one can make me talk about your participation in the research to anyone outside the research, including police or the court system. If you ask me to talk about your participation, I will. You are free to talk about your own participation any time.

You don't have to do this. If you want to say no, that's okay. Or if you agree to help and it feels weird or boring part way through, you can take a break or change your mind. Saying no won't affect whether you can work with the service provider. I can't pay you anything for your help, but I will pay the Village Council \$600 as a Thank You to the whole village for helping me.

Does this make sense? Do you have questions about what I'm doing?

Informant's Statement

The study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later I can ask Tracey even after she leaves my village. If I have questions about my rights, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington (206-543-0098). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ informant's signature

_____ date

_____ researcher's signature

_____ date

please check the parts you give consent to:

_____ I give permission for Tracey to watch while I work with the service provider.

_____ I give permission for Tracey to see the provider's notes about me.

_____ I give permission for Tracey to interview me about being a client.

_____ I give permission for Tracey to tape-record the interview(s).

CONSENT FORM for Elders
“Social Work Meanings and Practices among the Yup’ik of Southwestern Alaska”

Researcher: Tracey Burke

While I am here in _____, you can reach me at _____’s house. For after I leave the village, the phone number at my school is 206-221-7441.

Investigator’s Statement

Maybe you remember when I used to come here as a social worker to work with kids and families for the school. I don’t work for the school anymore. Now I am a graduate student doing research on how social services work in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and I welcome your participation in the study. This form is to tell you about the study so you can decide if you want to be part of it. I will read through the form with you, and you can ask me any questions you have about the project – about the purpose, what I will ask you to do, possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. After we go over the form and answer your questions, you can decide if you want to be part of the research. If you decide to participate, please sign your name at the end. The process is called “informed consent.”

Purpose and Benefits

This is a research project about how social services in the villages and Yup’ik culture fit together. Mostly I’m interested in the people who have social service jobs – what they think, and what they do in their jobs to make the jobs and culture fit as well as possible. (I am *not* trying to say how well they do their jobs.) I think this research is important because right now bosses and teachers in social services talk about making the cultures fit together, but nobody has asked people doing those jobs in the villages yet. I hope the results of the study will help us think of ways to improve social services and social work education programs so the cultures fit better.

I also am interested in what other people think about social services in the villages. As an Elder, you have a valuable perspective about problems and ways to solve them. I would appreciate hearing what you think.

This project is part of my schoolwork to help me get my Ph.D., and I will write papers and maybe even a book about what I learn.

Procedures

What I would ask you do is *to let me interview you about what you think about social services here in the village*. Mostly I will trust you to tell me what is important. I might also ask some questions like, “How have you seen social problems change?” and “What do you think needs to be done differently?” and “What advice do you have for social workers and social work teachers?”

If you agree to be interviewed, I’ll tape-record our conversation, if it’s okay with you. If you want to speak in Yup’ik, (name of translator) will interpret for us. I will ask someone

else in Bethel to re-translate what you say in Yup'ik so I get a good idea what you were thinking about. After the conversations are written down in English, I will erase all the tapes. If you feel more private, I won't tape-record, I'll just take notes.

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

You may feel sad talking about problems in the village. I think it will help to know that talking about it may help make things change. If you feel too upset or uncomfortable, you can change your mind about talking with me.

Other Information

I want to respect your privacy. I will take notes on what we talk about. When I write things down or tape record things, I will not use your real name. The Bethel translator won't know it's you on the tapes. Someone in Seattle will write down the English version of what you say, but that person won't know it's you either. In the papers I write or the book, I will not use your real name either. Before I write the papers or the book, only a few people will see my notes – mostly the teachers at my school who will help me with the research.

I will never tell anyone what you talked about with me *except* for three things. The first thing I will tell is if I think a child is being abused or neglected. The second thing is if a dependent adult is being hurt. Third, I will tell if I think someone is very suicidal or dangerous. Otherwise, I'll keep everything private. Just in case I learn of anything illegal, I have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the federal government. That way, no one can make me talk about your participation in the research to anyone outside the research, including police or the court system. If you want me to talk about your participation, I will. You are free to talk about your own participation in the research at any time.

You don't have to do this. If you want to say no, that's okay. Or if you agree to help and it feels uncomfortable part way through, you can take a break or change your mind. I can't pay you anything for your help, but I will pay the Village Council \$600 as a Thank You to the whole village for helping me.

Informant's Statement

The study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in the research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later I can ask Tracey even after she leaves my village. If I have questions about my rights, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington (206-543-0098). I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ informant's signature

_____ date

_____ researcher's signature

_____ date

_____ I give permission for Tracey to interview me.

_____ I give permission for Tracey to tape-record the interview(s).

The following information will be provided to all adult community members who approach me to discuss social work/social services in rural Alaska so that I may obtain to obtain VERBAL CONSENT. Given the informal settings of some interviews with community members, the information may not be provided in this exact format.

Maybe you remember when I used to come here as a social worker to work with kids and families for the school. I don't work for the school anymore. Now I am a graduate student at the University of Washington in Seattle. As part of my schoolwork, I am doing research on how social services work in the villages of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. I hope the results of the study will help us think of ways to improve social services and social work education programs. I will write papers and maybe even a book about what I learn.

If you want to talk to me about social services in the village, I'd be interested in what you think. I will listen as a researcher, not a social worker, so I won't be able to respond if you talk about a particular person. I will take notes on what you say, or if it's okay with you, I will tape record what you say. When our conversation is written down from the tapes, you can read what you said and add to it if you want. If you would feel more comfortable speaking in Yup'ik, _____ has agreed to translate for me. If you speak in Yup'ik, I will ask someone in Bethel to re-translate the taped conversation later so I have a good idea what you were thinking about.

I want to respect your privacy. When I write things down or tape record things, I will not use your real name. That way, the person in Seattle who writes down what you say on the tapes, and the person in Bethel who re-translates what you say in Yup'ik, won't know it's you. In the papers I write or the book, I will not use your real name either. I will change the details about you so people don't know what you said to me. Before I write the papers or the book, only a few people will see my notes – mainly the teachers at my school who will help me with the research.

I will never tell anyone what you talked about with me *except* for three things. The first thing I will tell is if I think there's child abuse or neglect going on. The second thing is if I think a dependent adult is being abused. And third, I will tell is if I think you are suicidal or dangerous to someone else. Otherwise, I'll keep everything private. In case I learn of anything illegal, I have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the federal government so no one can make me talk about your participation in the research with anyone outside the project, including the police or the court system. If you want me to talk about your participation, I will. You are free to talk about your own participation at any time.

You don't have to do this. If you decide to talk with me, and it feels weird or boring part way through, you can take a break or decide to quit. I can't pay you for your help, but I will pay the Village Council \$600 as a Thank You to the whole village for helping me.

Do you have questions about what I'm doing? If you think of questions for me later, I am staying at _____'s house. Or if you want to talk to me after I leave the village, they have the phone number at my school down at the Council office.



Appendix C: Response from the YKHC Human Research Committee and Executive Board
YUKON-KUSKOKWIM HEALTH CORPORATION

"Fostering Native Self-Determination in Primary Care, Prevention and Health Promotion."

YKHC Executive Board Cover Statement Regarding the Thesis of Tracey Burke

The Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation neither endorses nor confirms the veracity of this dissertation. We do however appreciate the time, effort, and thought that Ms. Burke has put into trying to better understand and document the understanding and effects of social services experienced on a day to day basis by a small Yup'ik community. We expect that this thoughtful essay will provoke further research to better elucidate the issues considered in this document.

The mission of YKHC includes improving and creating behavioral health systems that are synchronous with our regional Native heritage. In concert with our Native owners/users, we continue to implement village based programs to address behavioral health disparities experienced in our region.

Ms. Burke devotes a great deal of attention to a synopsis of services provided in the community, but we feel that this work does not fully or accurately represent services rendered by YKHC (and probably by other regional entities) at the village and regional level and would ask future researchers to independently verify or investigate services provided at the village level when expanding on this first stepping stone so elegantly put forward by Ms. Burke.

Curriculum Vitae

Tracey Kathleen Burke, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Education:

- 2003 Ph.D. University of Washington, School of Social Work
dissertation: "Social Services in Rural Alaska: An Ethnography of Service Provision in a Yup'ik Eskimo Community"
- 1994 M.S.W. University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, School of Social Work
- 1989 B.A. Villanova University, Philosophy Department & Honors Program

Areas of Interest:

- Social work practice with Alaska Native communities, children & families, and battered & sexually assaulted women;
- Anthropological and post-colonial theories and their application to social work, especially among northern aboriginal peoples;
- Child welfare & family violence and community/family conferencing models;
- Paraprofessionals in social services;
- Qualitative research methods and evaluation research; and
- Social work education and curriculum development, including via distance learning formats and technologies.

Grants, Awards & Honors:

- National Science Foundation, Office of Polar Programs, Arctic Social Sciences Program, Dissertation Improvement Grant #0084076, November 1, 2000-October 31, 2002; \$12,000 (funding for dissertation fieldwork 8/01-12/01)
- University of Washington School of Social Work Dissertation Support Award, 2000-01; \$1500 (funding for interview transcription costs)
- University of Washington School of Social Work Educational Technologies mini-grant, winter, 2000; \$800
- University of Minnesota Graduate School Fellowship, 1992-93; merit-based tuition award
- Phi Beta Kappa, inducted 1989

Journal Publications:

- Burke, T.K., Allen-Eckard, K., Kemp, S.P., Ware, J., Ackroyd, A., & Munoz, S. (2003). Community Family Support Meetings: Adding community resources to family decision-making. *Protecting Children*, 18(1-2), pp. 104-107. (special issue on research and evaluation of Family Group Conferences)

Keller, T.E., Whittaker, J.K., & Burke, T.K. (2001). Student debates in policy courses: Promoting policy-practice skills and knowledge through active learning. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 37:2, pp. 343-355.

Conference Presentations:

Beyond the two-day workshop: Using anthropology to practice cross-cultural social work (Society for Applied Anthropology; March, 2003; Portland, OR)

Community family support meetings: Practicing partnership in child welfare through family-group decision making
(American Humane Association Family Group Decision-Making Roundtable with Ms. Kara Allen-Eckard & Ms. Kristi Lund; June, 2003; Minneapolis, MN)

Papers in Progress:

Social service delivery in rural Alaska: Village perceptions of social problems and responses to them
(presentation accepted for the International Congress on Circumpolar Health's September, 2003, tri-annual meeting)

Social service provision in rural Alaska: Exploring the "fit" between traditional and western approaches to helping
(abstract submitted for the Society for Social Work and Research's January, 2004, conference)

Community family support meetings: Building a bridge between children's services and community
(chapter with Dr. Susan Kemp et al. accepted for an upcoming Handbook on services for children, youth, and families)

Research Experience:

Principal Investigator for:
"Social services in rural Alaska: An ethnography of service provision in a Yup'ik Eskimo community," dissertation

Research Assistant and Project Manager for:
"Community-Family Partnership Project evaluation," with Dr. Susan Kemp, winter, 2001-present

Research Assistant for:
"Asian American help-seeking trajectories," with Dr. Edwina Uehara, fall, 1999-spring, 2000

Research Practicum Student for:
"Non-custodial fathers and identity," with Dr. Pauline Erera, spring-summer, 1999

Teaching Experience:**Instructor:**

Foundation Practice II, III (undergraduate), winter-spring, 2002
 Children, Youth & Families Advanced Policy & Services (MSW), fall, 2000

Teaching Assistant/Teaching Practicum Student:

Children, Youth & Families Advanced Practice I, II (MSW), fall, 1999-winter, 2000
 Human Behavior & the Social Environment I, II (undergraduate), winter-spring, 1999
 Human Behavior & the Social Environment I, II (distance MSW), fall, 1998-winter, 1999
 Introduction to Research Methods (undergraduate), winter 1998
 Children, Youth & Families Advanced Policy & Services (MSW), fall, 1997

Professional Memberships:

Council for Social Work Education
 Society for Social Work and Research
 Society for Applied Anthropology
 National Association of Social Workers
 American Orthopsychiatric Association

Social Work Professional, Volunteer & Internship Experience:

Lower Kuskokwim School District – Student Services Department, Bethel, AK
 Social Worker II, January, 1995 – May, 1997

Lower Kuskokwim School District – Delta Youth Challenge, Bethel, AK
 Activities Coordinator/Social Worker, June, 1996 and June, 1997

Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, Mental Health Department, Bethel, AK
 On-Call Social Worker, summer weekends, 1995 and 1996

Teens for Peace in Croatia, Zagreb, Croatia
 Project Co-Leader, July, 1994 (volunteer)

Community-University Health Care Center, Minneapolis, MN
 MSW intern, September, 1993 - June, 1994

Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt, St. Paul, MN
 MSW intern, September, 1992 – June, 1993; volunteer, July, 1993 – June, 1994

Women in Crisis – Counseling and Assistance, Fairbanks, AK
 Counselor/Advocate, August, 1990 – May, 1992 (through Jesuit Volunteer Corps, 8/90-8/91); Relief Counselor September-December, 1994, and June-August, 1998

Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, Maternal-Child Health Program, Bethel, AK
 Teen Outreach Worker, August, 1989 – August, 1990 (through Jesuit Volunteer Corps)