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Résumé de l'article

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"It's like they have two parents": Consequences of inconsistent socialisation of Inuit children

Anne S. Douglas*

Résumé: «C'est comme avoir deux parents»: Les conséquences de la socialisation incohérente des jeunes Inuit

À partir de données recueillies à Arctic Bay (Nunavut) entre 1990 et 1994, cet article illustre la manière dont l'école s'est progressivement introduite dans les pratiques coutumières de socialisation des familles inuit. En conséquence, la pleine expression de la personne inuit diminue. Ces dommages sont inévitables car l'école, institution du courant majoritaire de la société canadienne, promeut une expression de la personne qui ne correspond pas à son homologue chez les Inuit. Pour ces derniers, traditionnellement, la socialisation des enfants tendait à leur faire surmonter les motivations égocentriques dans l'intérêt de la survie du groupe. Au contraire, l'école socialise les enfants dans l'optique d'une survie individuelle dans la compétition au sein de l'économie salariée. Il existe des différences frappantes entre les attentes dans chacun des contextes pour ce qui est du comportement socialement responsable.

Abstract: "It's like they have two parents": Consequences of the inconsistent socialisation of Inuit children

Drawing on data collected in Arctic Bay (Nunavut) between 1990 and 1994, this article illustrates how school has incrementally intruded on the customary socialisation practices of Inuit families. Consequently, the full expression of Inuit personhood is diminishing. This damage is inevitable because school, an institution of mainstream Canadian society, promotes an expression of personhood that is inconsistent with its counterpart in Inuit society, which has traditionally socialised children to overcome egocentric concerns in the interest of group survival. In contrast, school socialises children for competitive individual survival in a wage economy. The different expectations for socially responsible behaviour in each context are particularly striking.

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Introduction

"It's like they have two [sets of] parents." This was how Kowtak Joseph, a respected grandmother in the High Arctic community of Arctic Bay (Nunavut), described students at the local school. We were walking home after a school meeting for parents. I had come to Arctic Bay to learn how much control this community had over its school and, as a corollary, how Inuit were accommodating the demands of school on their lives. Kowtak Joseph summed up this challenge. While acknowledging the students' predicament, her words also addressed the confusion of her fellow parents.

Most Arctic Bay parents accepted school: they wanted their children to learn "new survival skills." But school was also introducing new behavioural standards. What was acceptable there was inconsistent with the responsive behaviour that parents typically expected from children and adults. As a result, many questioned what was happening. Parents in Western cultures exert some local control over academic orientation and curriculum through parents' meetings and committees. Most accept the prevailing socialisation at school as being compatible with the way they themselves rear their children. Immigrants likewise accept it because they have chosen to bring up their children in a new cultural setting (Ogbu 1992).

In Arctic Bay, parents could contribute to their children's schooling through a locally elected Community Education Council (CEC) and through community-wide parents' meetings. Initially, school itself was a novelty for many. Arctic Bay was relatively new and extended families were still moving there from their camps in the mid to late 1970s. A large number of parents had thus never attended school; quite a few had some elementary schooling, and a handful some years of high school. While some of the parents' questions at school meetings addressed academic content, their main preoccupation was the school's influence on their children's behaviour. Their challenge lay in proving the legitimacy of their concerns to the school authorities. However, what mattered to the former was sometimes irrelevant to the latter. The school authorities, for their part, were often frustrated by the parents' seeming inability to grasp the implicit rationale for schooling. The "two parents" could not easily negotiate common ground because they had differing expectations for methods and goals. The differences came down to conflicting requirements for personal responsibility.

This article illustrates how school has incrementally intruded on customary socialisation by Inuit families. I will use data collected in Arctic Bay between 1990 and 1994 during my doctoral fieldwork, i.e., visits to Inuit families, observations and records of parents' meetings, and interviews with community members and school staff (Douglas 1998). But first let me discuss personhood.

Personhood and sociocultural implications

Personhood is the socially oriented part of the self (Fortes 1973 in Dorais and Searles 2001: 17). Its expression is interdependent with society and explains "a wide range of behaviour, emotions and events" (La Fontaine 1985: 126). Universally, adults socialise children to conform to worldviews that give meaning to beings, objects, and events (Geertz 1973; Rosaldo 1984; Tambiah 1990). Each society endows the objects and events in its surrounding environment with cultural ideas, thereby turning them into symbols that evoke action, thought, and feeling. In general, outsiders lack the insight to identify another culture's symbols (*ibid.*).

There are two contrasting understandings of an individual's relationship to society. People who value social bonds and responsibilities over individuality adopt a sociocentric orientation; people with the opposite view, an egocentric one (Shweder and Bourne 1984; Tambiah 1990; Wagner 1981). The two perspectives also have contrasting styles of reasoning, as seen in the practice of knowledge and modes of emotional experience. For instance, sociocentricity fosters self-effacement while egocentricity promotes competitiveness and affective neutrality (Lave and Wenger 1991; Leacock 1985; Rogoff 1990; Rosaldo 1984; Stairs 1992; Tambiah 1990). These orientations should be regarded as ideal types. In all societies, personhood reflects a balance between social integration and individuation (La Fontaine 1985; Wagner 1981).

When members of a society encounter an unfamiliar situation, they find ways either to modify their interaction or to extend customary symbolic meanings into the new settings. This particularly applies to expressions of personhood. Furthermore, it is possible to learn to fulfill personhood requirements in more than one setting. Such flexibility is effective when each setting remains culturally vital (Wolcott 1991), and as long as symbols can be accommodated by the prevailing interrelations of a new setting. A symbol may also change or even lose its meaning because socio-cultural ideas and their expressions are ever transforming (Keesing 1975; Scott 1993; Tambiah 1990; Wagner 1981).

Personhood in mainstream Canadian society

Because mainstream Canada is a Westernised society, it subscribes to the modern view that individual phenomena (e.g., humans) are abstracted from their context. The domain of work is equated with the scientifically observable world and people participate in it as autonomous units with individual rights. Their economic security and social worth lie in the value attributed to their work (La Fontaine 1985; Marcuse 1966; Tambiah 1990; Taylor 1989). The working world is a series of institutions ranging from vast government bureaucracies to small businesses. These institutions reflect the goals of economic growth and individual competition; on them depend social order and organisation, and they enable people to connect to society through

roles that are mediated by impersonal regulations. When and where one works is the main constraint of this world (Marcuse 1966; Tambiah 1990).

The family, though likewise an institution, is viewed as separate from, and less significant than the domain of work. In this private sphere people are liberated from work's restraints; they can express their social independence through personal and private choices. As the institution of intended socialisation and integration, school is the bridge between family and society. Here children learn the standardised personhood that applies in all non-family settings.

Personhood in Inuit society

Personhood in Inuit society has many facets, being rich and complex. First, Inuit society exemplifies socio-centric organisation. Unlike mainstream Canada, it has but one institution—kinship. While social order is maintained through kinship rules, Inuit themselves embody these rules, which serve the goal of group survival.

Inuit social organisation

Inuit kin in north Baffin Island include blood relatives, affinal relatives (those through marriage), adoptees, and name-sakes (people named after a usually deceased relative). Inuit kinship encompasses a series of dyadic relationships (e.g., mother-daughter, uncle-nephew, elder-younger brother) (Damas 1963). The kind of relationship is defined by the kin term that each member of the pair uses for the other, and it embodies specific rules of conduct that include respect, obedience, and cooperation. Kin terms also convey the appropriate emotional attachment between two kin, ranging from close affection to complete avoidance—the customary response to opposite-sex in-laws, among others. These multiple relationships are potential roles, lying in abeyance until the appropriate setting activates them. A group is defined by the sum of all possible kin interactions.

Before several families now living in Arctic Bay moved into the settlement, they had lived in extended family camps in and around Admiralty Inlet, exemplifying a "family-oriented society" (Burch 1975: 294). Indeed, as one High Arctic resident put it, "each family *was* its own community" (Nasook 1990: 50). A family group needed a minimum of two couples, perhaps parents and a married child, or two siblings (Burch 1975; Damas 1963). But the total number of people could fluctuate; the group adapted readily if other kin joined up or if some members left for other destinations.

Inuit socialisation

Children were initiated into the obligations of kinship from infancy. Inuit told me how, as small children, they had been taught to recite the terms for their kin. Briggs

(1970) noted this practice among the Utkuhikhalingmiut. I observed it continuing in some Arctic Bay families. Kinship knowledge was the basis for recognition that the group comes first. To impress this covenant on children, and because compliance entailed demanding responsibilities, their socialisation was "intensely personal" (Diamond 1974: 172 in Leacock 1985: 83). Biological parents were usually the most constant teachers, but other kin group members took part (Briggs 1970, 1998; Washburne 1940). As adults usually outnumbered children in those days, one child had many teachers. Children grew up surrounded by expectations to be respectful, obedient, cooperative, and restrained.

Adult Inuit worked hard to impress their values onto children, exhorting them to pay close attention, this being the rudimentary discipline of learning to listen and observe. But children had to work hard too; they had to develop rigorous self-discipline and overcome their normal self-interest. As Rebecca Williams (pers. comm. 1991) said, "Our parents were strict with us; we had to obey them!" Sarah Alooloo (pers. comm. 1991) stressed, "We had to respect them, listen to them." Yupiit likewise feel that socialisation should "wake up" children's minds (Fienup-Riordon 1986: 263). Alert minds indicate that children are developing *isuma*, "a major criterion of maturity" (Briggs 1991: 267; 1998: 233) required for picking up "desirable behaviour" and acquiring knowledge (Briggs 1987: 10).

From my Western perspective, the socialisation methods seemed innovative. Parents used few words but acted effectively. A mother would ignore a child's requests until the child had given up; or would give a direct, stern look to make the child comply. At times a slightly wrinkled nose conveyed "no," or slightly raised eyebrows "yes." But adults generally ignored children who, from my perspective, truly deserved a response (*cf*. Briggs 1998). On the other hand, I also saw Inuit parents ignore children acting disruptively. Similar behaviour would be verbally censured in "southern" families. In fact, the adults appeared oblivious. Nor would they warn against a potential danger, such as a child reaching for a knife or a hot teapot. If harm occurred, someone attended to it; otherwise the outcome, unless destructive, was ignored.

In time I recognised that many parents were constantly, yet unobtrusively, alert to their children. Apparent signs of parental indifference were in fact reinforcements of the valued behaviours of self-discipline, self-sufficiency, and non-interference (Kingston 2008; Minor 1992). Parents consciously fostered these behaviours by consistently modelling them, and, though unobserved or unrecognised by me, were quite likely employing other tactics. As children are inclined to conform, and, as in the case of these Inuit children, their own wishes were consistently thwarted, they would inevitably begin to pay attention to their parents and fall in line with their example. I was aware of the apprehensive attention on some children's faces as they approached 4 or 5 years of age. When young children were out of sight outdoors, some parents assumed that other adults would intervene if necessary. While I never witnessed an Inuk parent scold or express anger towards a child, I became aware of the discipline present in many homes. An implicit, almost palpable, code of discipline seemed to

hang in the air. The understanding was mutual as parents signalled their instructions and as children paid attention.

Briggs (1970, 1982, 1987, 1991, 1998) showed how parents urged, if not forced, children to internalise necessary emotions by drawing them into various rituals, or games, that arouse complex and conflicting feelings. These rituals provoked a sense of danger that ultimately made children conform to socially approved values and behaviour. Thus, a child might be encouraged to protect and nurture a small animal or younger child, then abruptly be told to harm or destroy it—the confused child felt torn. The desired goal here was to recognize that non-violence is sanctioned although violence is also sometimes unavoidable. After being consistently and repeatedly drawn into similar rituals, children would become increasingly cooperative, yet also self-sufficient.

These rituals underscore the central role of emotions in Inuit society. The relevant ones here include *kangngu-*, defined as shyness, or wanting to be inconspicuous or unobserved (Briggs 1970: 116; 1998: 233). This attribute should follow naturally once a child develops *isuma*. While Inuit consider it a prerequisite for greater maturity and knowledge, Qallunaat (non-Inuit) consider it a hindrance to advancement. Another emotion is *ilira-*, a respectful fear or fearful respect that instils a wish to obey (Briggs 1970: 345; 1998: 146-149; 232-233; Brody 1975: 158-159). Briggs (1998: 148) considered it a necessary feeling of children towards parents, and one they "have to *learn* to feel" (italics in original). Both Briggs and Brody agreed that Inuit feel, or have felt it, towards strangers. A final emotion is *kappia-*, a fear of physical injury (Briggs 1998: 147ff., 233). This emotion, once implanted, instils a fear of angry, unpredictable people. It also makes children unwilling to evoke anger in others. Such a feeling was and is not permissible among Inuit because it disrupts social relations and could destroy the group (Briggs 1970, 1998; Kingston 2008; Rosaldo 1984).

All in all, these socialisation practices generate attitudes of mutual respect and trust. Inuit show these attitudes by not interfering with one another (Kingston 2008; Minor 1992; Ridington 1988). When inclined to comment on another's actions, they do so indirectly (Kingston 2008; Minor 1992; Morrow 1990). Moreover this atmosphere of trust allows Inuit to tolerate a high degree of uncooperative or disruptive behaviour in another group member—up to the point where it threatens group survival (Kingston 2008; Minor 1992; Rasing 1994).

The embodiment of personhood

Inuit socialisation is holistic. Its methods impress a variety of attributes simultaneously, instilling kin interdependence yet also fostering the complimentary principle of individual self-sufficiency or autonomy. Here is the rationale: by developing and fulfilling a capacity to be both skilful and knowledgeable, one becomes more responsible towards and for others. Thus, in the Inuit context, personal self-sufficiency should not be confused with social independence. Rather, it exemplifies full

responsibility for oneself within a context of responsibility towards others. Commitment to the group provides this attribute with some leeway, while keeping it in check (Ingold 1980; Ridington 1988).

Purposeful thinking is essential to personhood. Inuit count on mental support from others (Fienup-Riordan 1986). Tony Ullikatar (pers. comm. 1993), a student in education, confirmed that absent family members find comfort in knowing their families are thinking about them. He continued, "We learn to think by doing what we are thinking about" (*cf*. Leacock 1985; Rogoff 1990).

Being technologically and environmentally knowledgeable is key to self-sufficient personhood. Inuit children traditionally learned requisite skills by observing and imitating experienced kin, just as an apprentice learns skills and concepts in authentic contexts (Bodenhorn 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wertsch 1991). Knowledge is autonomously created yet communally shared. In the manner of its production and circulation, knowledge is a metaphor for kinship, that is, each person's knowledge is available for all to use, but one only uses what is expedient at a given time (Roepstroff 1998). This knowledge tradition depends on people being able to trust each other's "informed intelligence" (Ridington 1988: 107).

Inuit progressed through stages of increasing maturity to the full embodiment of personhood of their elders, frequently referred to as *inummariit* ('ideal or real Inuit'). This term originally meant Inuit with "distinctive skills and personality" living on the land; it is now more loosely applied to senior community members (Brody 1975: 125). According to Atagootak Ipeelee (pers. comm. 2009) a family could not manage without an elder in pre-settlement days. Taamusi Qumaq (1991: 50) may have been thinking of elders when writing his definition of school, *ilinniavik*: "A school is a building operated by Qallunaat. This has many students learning only by word of hearing. A person can also be a school (a learning source) observed while he is working on real life work."[1] *Inummariit* stand out; one instinctively respects them. Inuit have traditionally turned to them for advice or to resolve disputes because each elder is a microcosm of society. They physically and psychically embody the entirety of Inuit social knowledge—interpersonal, technological, and environmental. Thus they represent the culmination of self-discipline, self-sufficiency, and perseverance, all within the framework of deepening integration into the group.

Two socialisation systems meet

School came to Arctic Bay in 1959. The first teacher, Miss Hinds, noted that her nine students were attentive, hardworking, and "among the most intelligent of any Eskimos I had taught up to this time" (in Macpherson 1991: 125). Most of them could already read and write; family members had taught them Inuktitut syllabics (Hinds 1968). The next teacher felt the same way. The students proved eager to learn and

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[1] I thank Betsy Annahataq for this translation from Inuktitut.

"progressed very rapidly" (Dalby 1962: 15). The girls in particular appeared mature beyond their years and reflected "the self-reliance and perseverance of an individualistic nature" (*ibid*.: 16).

The first official school was built in 1962. By 1967 it had two rooms, two teachers, and 30 students. By 1993 it was in its fourth building with 200 students. Meanwhile, the community had grown from five families to 550 residents (247 or 44% under 14 years of age). The Canadian government's policy of compulsory education prompted relocation from family camps to the settlement. Once there, families began to adapt their individual groups to this larger community through marriage and naming. They also allocated board memberships on the new "southern" institutions equally among themselves. The community became one large extended family (*cf.* Nasook 1990). At the same time, the original families continued their customary obligations: immediate kin sought to keep their homes near each other, visited each other frequently, and shared a daily meal. While kinship is no longer necessary for contemporary Inuit social organisation, it continues to influence social activity, particularly hunting (Wenzel 1995). Knowing who are kin helps explain why one woman would spend the night helping another sew—the two are first cousins. Or why the community's best hunter would accompany a town-based young man on his first hunt—the former is the latter's uncle. Name relationships may be the community's most enduring kinship practice. Nuttall (1992: 7) considered names central to understanding a Greenlandic community.

Nonetheless it would be inaccurate and unjust to view this Inuit community as a collective whole. A continuum already existed with respect to school experience. As the population grew, several other continua evolved regarding child rearing. While some parents continued to practise their customary socialisation, others were more explicitly controlling with their children. Still others were a mixture of both. Then some were neither traditional nor controlling in the "southern" manner. They may have thought that their children would pick up appropriate behaviour or that other people would watch over them. Such parents were not consciously negligent. They may have been raised by a group of kin who were no longer available to assist them, and were unaware of specific parenting responsibilities, particularly in a nuclear family. In spite of these different outlooks, community life had a distinctive spirit. Community activities, together with family life, mattered more than school for most adults. As Sipporah Oyukuluk (pers. com. 1993) emphasised, "There's life, and then there's school."

The school staff adapted to the growing community. By 1993 there were a Qallunaaq principal, an Inuk vice-principal, Inuit professional teachers, Inuit teaching assistants, and two or three Inuit culture teachers in addition to the professional Qallunaat teachers, now in the minority. The academic content today proceeds from Inuktitut to English. From Grades 1 through 6 the students follow an integrated thematic curriculum, *Piniaqtavut*, prepared by the Baffin School Board. This approach links language with social and cultural concepts. Thus, if "the seal" were the theme for one term, it would be the common focus of all subjects. Students from Grade 7 on use the Alberta provincial curriculum. This senior curriculum addresses subjects individually.

Most students and parents—and even some Inuit teachers—refer to the English language curriculum as *Qallunaatitut* ('in the manner of Qallunaat'). In contrast, Inuit refer to the curriculum in their own language as *Inuktitut* ('in the manner of an Inuk'), even though the nature of the curriculum and the didactic method are "in the manner of Qallunaat." When students shift to English and individual subjects, they start learning how to compartmentalise abstract knowledge out of context. They find this novel learning style challenging for several reasons (Bodenhorn 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wertsch 1991). First, they are accustomed to appropriating new information in context and over time, thereby accommodating the knowledge in greater depth. Hence, a teacher-in-training found her summer course so interesting that she planned to take it again although she had met the curriculum requirement (Lucy Taqtu, pers. comm. 1994). Second, school knowledge is standardised and impersonal: one teacher provides the same knowledge simultaneously to a group of students who are assessed individually. The teacher is also directive, the method being teacher-centred. Third, because they are used to focused thinking, some students have trouble skipping discontinuously from one idea to another. The teachers move ahead too quickly for them; some students think they talk too much. Students fall behind if unable to keep up with the teacher's pace. Some repeat a grade or two, and others drop out.

The school board policy of social promotion, intended to keep students with their own age groups, may also free some students from pressure to work. The result, however, is low or ambiguous class standards. Notwithstanding academic expectations, many students like to attend because, as Qallunaaq teacher Angus Murray (pers. comm. 1993) observed, "they find it a social place." School provides their only available social focus, and the parameters for a peer culture—intense bonding in peer groups being typical in many Inuit and First Nations communities (Condon 1987; Wax et al. 1989[1964]). Many students are nonetheless confused, and not only because they are newly exposed to a large same-age group. They may be rejecting both the teachers' interference in their autonomy and the aspects of their own culture they find redundant. But again, they may feel rejected in both contexts; thus they create a culture amongst themselves. According to one parent, peer pressure is very strong. Elisapee Inuaraq (pers. comm. 1992), a culture instructor, felt compelled to teach the high school students about kinship terms, since "[t]hey are going out with their cousins!"

The parents could not ignore school; it separated them from their children. But school needed their support and expected them to respond as southern parents would. These Inuit parents encompassed broad ranges of age and school experience. Some were barely in their 20s and others in their mid to late 60s. The latter were largely parents who had adopted children two generations younger. While some parents had never gone to school, those who had gone possessed qualitatively different experiences; the older schooled parents had undergone more rigorous schooling than had the younger ones. In the 1960s and 1970s academic standards had been higher and discipline stricter. Because of their widely differing backgrounds, parents expressed a variety of responses to school. Some were concerned about matters that were irrelevant to others. The intensity of concern also varied. There were, so to speak, circles of concern that might or might not overlap if not coincide with each other. In its early

days, school had been an adjunct to the community. Now it was pervasive. Parents looked for aspects of school to which they could relate, while some were reluctant to go to school because they were ill at ease. Classroom assistant Sarah Alooloo (pers. comm. 1993) believed some parents "feel tense because they don't know what they are supposed to do; they feel left behind. They don't know how to 'help' in the classroom." One parent said she and others went to school infrequently because, "We don't know each other's languages; the only communication we have is smiling" (Tina Pauloosie, pers. comm. 1992).

Lack of discipline

Whatever their degree of involvement in school, parents were frustrated by the dearth of discipline. They noticed this dearth when visiting the school. Others noticed it through their children's attitudes and their discussions with other parents. Nute Arnaujumajuq (pers. comm. 1991), a parent and the community's mayor, blamed both the lax academic standards and the inadequate discipline on Baffin School Board policy. Having spent some years at a residential school in Churchill, Arnaujumajuq claimed school board policy reflected the political mood of Inuit Tapirisat in the early 1970s. Many of that generation had suffered in school at the hands of Qallunaat. While learning new skills, they had endured consistent lack of self-worth and cultural deprivation. Today, they wished to protect younger generations from their experience. But, according to Arnaujumajuq, they failed to realise the negative effects of relaxed discipline. They thus failed to develop an appropriate code of discipline whereby students could work and learn. Their educational philosophy is described in Board policy:

> […] the school must be committed to serving the rights of the child within the cultural framework of the community.
>
> 2. School complements the family as a place where the child learns to become an individual and a responsible person. It is an extension of the family which is the primary focus of the child and the first centre of learning. It goes without saying, therefore, that there must be close ties between the school and the family. […]
>
> 4. The school is a place where young people develop an identity. Where young adults arrive at a realistic sense of what they are, what they want, what they need, and what their responsibilities are to the community [...] (BDBE 1988: Policy 1.4).

These policy goals raise complex challenges. They attempt to reconcile two distinct social institutions: the Inuit family and school. This vision is also contradictory. It endorses the primacy of the Inuit family as "the first centre of learning" yet portrays school not only as an "extension of the family" but also as the "place where young people develop an identity." While the policy reduces cultural deprivation, it has negative side-effects. The Qallunaaq principal complied with the policy by promoting school as a friendly, non-threatening place and by supporting the Inuit professional teachers. However, the principal was both overprotective and overly informal with these teachers, and maintained a jocular, light-hearted relationship. This approach was

to their disadvantage because it kept some of them from growing into full maturity as adult Inuit models and as disciplined teachers.

The principal's attitude was also detrimental to the Qallunaat teachers. They were left to fend for themselves. The principal may not have condoned delinquent student behaviour, but nonetheless gave little open support to staff members when they tried to control it. Qallunaat teachers told me they had done their best to defuse unruly situations. They had sound classroom practices that depended on the students being present and attentive. Yet they felt frustrated by their difficulty to exert control in a generally lax atmosphere. When Qallunaat teachers chastised students or imposed discipline, some students failed to comply and later told their parents. Some parents, concerned that their children were being badly treated, confronted the teachers. Teacher Susan Riach (pers. comm. 1993) recalled how one angry mother came to school and said, "I'm going to call the RCMP![2]" While transgressing the non-interference norm of her own Inuit culture, this parent had no trouble exercising her rights in the mainstream social setting of school.

Even when students attended regularly, the lax atmosphere undermined their efforts to learn. Angus Murray (pers. comm. 1993) recognised the intelligence of many students, and was frustrated by those who said the work was "too hard." He believed students had so long been able to avoid effort that this avoidance was now ingrained. He pointed to one student who, although spending most of his time at his family camp, always caught up quickly and usually surpassed his classmates. This student obviously had maintained the customary attentive, disciplined approach to learning. The students in the junior grades had fewer disciplinary problems, many being still conditioned to obey. Moreover their teachers were from the community and familiar (if not related) to them. While the Inuit teachers had learned to control the class and hold the students' attention, they tended to ignore the less compliant ones, unless they were extremely disruptive. At some point a teacher would sit a disruptive child beside herself, but generally without admonishment. While these teachers might tolerate disruptive behaviour more than would their Qallunaat counterparts, they might also be waiting for their students to show signs of developing *isuma.* In contrast, Qallunaat teachers labelled some noncompliant students as "slow learners."

Many parents were extremely concerned. Sam Willie (pers. comm. 1992), another parent who had attended residential school, recognised that the standards were too lax but added, "This is our system, and we are stuck with it." Other parents said that students should know more than they were presently learning. Moses Oyukuluk (pers. comm. 1993) had not attended school but noted the lack of rigour. Wanting the students to be well educated, he believed that the teachers should have greater control. At a 1993 CEC meeting, Levi Barnabas stated that "elders should be present in school with the teachers to teach social life." Other parents noted the absence of the respectful school behaviour of early days. Current parents who had addressed their former teachers as "Miss" and "Mr." deplored the practice of addressing teachers by their first names. These parents

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2 I.e., Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

were seeking ways to promote respect in school, and probably recognised an absence of *ilira-*. Some were also critical of days intended to be fun such as “hat day” or “green day” (i.e., St. Patrick’s Day). On several occasions parents objected to celebrating Halloween in school; as one told the CEC in 1990, “Halloween should not be taught.”

Attendance

Lack of discipline led to concerns about poor attendance, which was not unique to Arctic Bay (Briggs 1997). Historically, attendance had been poor; the school did all it could to improve the situation. Each month the names of the “perfect attenders” were announced on the community radio. These students also received awards at a monthly ceremony in the school gym. The school needed the parents’ help. Some of them made a concerted effort to get their children to school; others were more or less encouraging. Still others, however, felt that the children should be responsible for going to school on their own. The school employed a School Community Counsellor whose primary responsibility was to visit families with truant children. This was a priority of the NWT Department of Education. The counsellor was not entirely comfortable with her job. During visits to parents in their homes “they turn their faces” from her. Parents resented this intrusion, especially coming from a member of their own community. Some might also have wished to respect their children’s choice to attend or not.

Another consideration was the limit of the school’s jurisdiction. Parents wanted this perimeter to be clear if they were to cooperate in ensuring their children’s attendance. The CEC frequently discussed maintenance of the school fence, which protected the children from traffic at a dangerous intersection of two main roads but was constantly in need of repair. Parents wanted the school’s space and time boundaries to be explicit, and to know who was responsible when the students were within them. They were challenged to find ways to watch over children once they became students and expressed concerns about who should be supervising them both in and out of school. One parent wanted to know whether school was responsible for students when they were off school property during school hours. Another asked the school to prevent the co-op from selling food to the students at recess. During a 1993 CEC meeting, Martha Qaunaq suggested that “someone who is not a teacher” should be present in school at all times. Several agreed with Levi Barnabas’s suggestion that this person should be an elder. One parent believed such supervision would help to prevent fighting. Another claimed that aggressive behaviour is not part of Inuit culture, and that the children picked it up from the teachers. Fights at school worried parents; I sensed that many of them experienced profound distress at the thought of their children being either the target or the cause of feelings of *kappia-*.

Cultural Inclusion classes

Some parents welcomed the authentic representation of their culture in the required "Cultural Inclusion" classes taught by community members. The classes are intended to develop "knowledge and skills in aspects of Inuit culture" (BDBE 1988: Policy 1.5). They were essential for one mother who had no time to teach her children at home. Some interested parents expressed concern that the students did not finish their work, and moreover the articles they made were "too easy," e.g., mittens for the girls or fish nets for the boys. Rebecca Williams (pers. comm. 1991) explained that children always had to finish their tasks in traditional Inuit culture; other parents echoed those sentiments. Moses Oyukuluk (pers. comm. 1993) would prefer to see the boys get out and "make big things, like houses." Olayuk Kigutikajuk (CEC meeting 1992), an accomplished sewer, requested that the CEC allow the girls to use real skins instead of duffle. The classes challenged both the instructors and the students (Douglas 1994). Some students took the classes seriously, but the majority appeared disinterested and some wandered off. They were insufficiently attuned to their own culture, had lost interest in it, or were confused by the use of another teaching method. Moreover, the Qallunaaq principal did not consider the classes to have academic value and appeared frustrated by the instructors' seeming inability to teach, although they were all experienced practitioners. While parents discussed Culture Inclusion classes with ease, some had trouble assessing their children's academic work. Paunarjuk Enoogoo (pers. comm. 1991) confided, "We didn't use to learn things by talking." As one parent queried at a 1992 CEC meeting "How can I tell if a piece of paper with writing on it is finished?"

Participation of parents

Many parents wanted to do what school expected of them but knew neither precisely what it was nor how to do it. In 1990, one concerned parent even asked the CEC for a course in contemporary parenting. Some parents thus sensed they were not attending to something that they should be doing, and recognised they might not live up to school's expectations. While many parents were unable to transcend the language barrier, a few hesitated to contravene the implicit non-interference code of Inuit culture by participating in school like a southern parent.

The school staff tried hard to encourage parental support of the students. Most teachers sent home envelopes of students' work every two weeks, and all teachers filled out report cards three times during the school year. Concurrent with the report periods, teachers held scheduled interviews with parents to discuss their children's progress and report cards. A special effort was made to accommodate parents by offering them tea, coffee, and cookies in the staff lounge. Many parents appeared to be content with the procedure, some looked uncomfortable, and others chose not to come. Parents who hesitated to come explained they did not understand what was expected of them or thought the teacher would discuss discipline problems. One parent said some of them resented being told their children had academic problems; they left the school thinking,

"I don't like my child to embarrass me like that." This parent obviously found the process intrusive as it reflected badly on her, as a parent, and on her child, as a student. There was further potential for embarrassment when the Qallunaaq teacher required an interpreter for the interview; none of these teachers spoke Inuktitut, and few of the Inuit parents with English-language skills had the fluency to discuss academic concerns. According to another parent, the presence of a third person, the interpreter, made an already awkward situation more so; it was mortifying for her to have another Inuk as a witness. In addition, an experienced Inuk teacher, Morty Alooloo (pers. comm. 1992), considered the Qallunaat teachers' style of communication to be intimidating. She said that Inuit are sensitive to body language and that the teachers' predisposition to look directly into parents' eyes made them uncomfortable. She added that many Inuit are frightened by the sound of Qallunaat's voices and their forceful (i.e., authoritarian) manner of speaking.

Several Qallunaat teachers confirmed these views. They agreed that most parents were anxious to know whether their children listened, obeyed, and came on time. Many parents were reportedly concerned about whether their children were "good" in school; "good" meaning appropriate behaviour rather than academic success. One parent queried, "Isn't that what Qallunaat want, that the students are good in school?" Susan Riach (pers. comm. 1993) further explained parental discomfort with interviews. As she began to tell one parent that her child needed to improve a particular aspect of schoolwork, the interpreter interrupted to say, "I can't tell her that!" The interpreter was resisting normative school practices not only by refusing to take part in an intrusive procedure, but also by defending a fellow Inuk from it.

Many parents had tried to support school but were distressed by its indifference towards students after they dropped out, and some even thought that school was implicated in the problem. As one parent said, students drop out due to lack of interest. According to another, students lack interest because the classes are too large. During a 1993 CEC meeting, Leah Okadluk stated that students drop out because they have no one to talk to when they have a problem. One parent suggested that 16 year-olds drop out because at that age they do not like to be told what to do. Most parents could not understand that school operates under the same regulations as those of other institutions in mainstream society: once students 16 and older stop attending, school has no further responsibility. From the perspective of their own holistic orientation, parents expected school to continue to be responsible since it had taken over their children's socialisation. For those parents, school seemed to tell students they could do whatever they wanted once they turned 16. Charlie Inuaraq worried that at that age school had not yet prepared them to do anything. Despite their anxieties and concerns, parents recognised they were partly responsible for their children's education. Many had moved into the community for that reason. In the words of Nute Arnaujumajuq (pers. comm. 1991), "Inuit are making changes, but very slowly. It will take a long time to get school where it should be."

Discussion and conclusion

When Inuit children become students, they are released from a familiar set of social requirements and submitted to another and uniquely different one. The new requirements are manifested through impersonal external regulations, new interpersonal relations, and constraints of time and place (Briggs 2001). The students are thus imprinted with the standardised expectations of personhood in mainstream society. But without the emotional messages that once nudged them toward correct behaviour, these young Inuit find the school atmosphere bland and devitalised.

Inuit parents confront a dilemma. It is difficult for them to know what their children are experiencing in school. They would like to find a way of monitoring the new influences on their children, but they are confused as to what their responsibilities should be. Both school and parents want children to be properly educated, yet a subtle power struggle exists as to whose rules should prevail. Each is frustrated by the other's seeming lack of discipline. From the school's perspective, many parents will not make their children obey its regulations and are not amenable to discussing their children's work with the teachers. For their part, parents are disheartened that their children fail to exhibit some form of disciplined behaviour. This is the least they would expect from school, yet school does not teach it in a form they can identify. Because they would like to see some recognisable relationship rules, they seek ways to introduce their own by requesting, for instance, the presence of fellow parents to monitor in the traditional way, or elders to model appropriate behaviour.

School board policy exacerbates, if not distorts, an already confusing situation. The original policy makers wanted to free the school from harsh and unjustified discipline. Unwittingly, however, they undermined both the essence of their own social practice and the school's capacity for acceptable discipline. The new relaxed standards have allowed the students disproportionate freedom from the customary constraints of school. Moreover, the original policy makers had been so culturally deprived that they felt compelled to safeguard their culture by making it explicit. Thus they created an ethnic identity by insisting that school affirm Inuit culture through the language of instruction and through course content. Members of a cultural group assert their uniqueness in this way when they encounter another one that inhibits or threatens the expression of their culture. To distinguish themselves from the second, usually more powerful group, the first group creates a concrete and explicit statement of their culture (Barth 1969; Briggs 2001; Müller-Wille 2001).

However, an ethnic identity is not a culture; it is a means whereby a cultural group can draw out its distinctions interculturally and politically. Authentic cultural practice is intracultural; it lies in relationships. Some parents in the community, and most of the Inuit teachers, have sufficient expertise in both Inuit and mainstream Canadian cultures to participate in both cultural orientations—their extended families and the mainstream institutions. They attended school in the days when it was more rigorous but less invasive. Hence their families enjoyed greater leeway in socialising them. Other parents who never attended school still lead successful lives as Inuit. In contrast, many younger

contemporary parents are less practised in the Inuit setting than was the preceding generation. This is due not only to the increasingly penetrating requirements of school but also to the exigencies of living in a mainstream-style community with numerous opportunities for individual choice.

Because people embody culture, school is inevitably a site of socio-cultural change. In fact, when Inuit relate to school in any capacity, they are inescapably drawn into the process of change. School puts Inuit personhood to a hard test. As interpersonal relationships become increasingly threatened, Inuit sense their own fragility. Each Inuk expresses personhood as a matter of individual history and choice. While kin cooperation is no longer an urgent social priority, many Inuit still count on it for both practical and emotional reasons. Moreover most Inuit still value their kin relationships and the accompanying socio-centric worldview; a sufficient social base exists to ensure their continuation. Contemporary Inuit parents are now challenged to maintain and model the behaviour and attitudes they prize while accommodating new survival skills. In this, they will be assisted by a disciplined, focused approach to the task at hand that has always been a hallmark of Inuit culture.

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