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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Of Salmon, Spirits, Silence, and Steam: A Study of Sexual Violence in Rural Alaska

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in Criminology, Law and Society

by

Jeremy Braithwaite

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Elliott Currie, Chair
Professor John Dombrink
Professor Emeritus James Diego Vigil

2016

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I also would like to thank John Dombrink for his unwavering support on this project, as well as guiding me through the graduate program. John, you facilitated my entrée into CLS and always took great strides to make me feel welcome at UCI. As I’ve told you a time or two, I always feel inspired after our conversations, as your questions and comments always take me to the “unknown.” Your input on this project indeed shaped its growth over the past three years. Thanks for everything.

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Ms. Desa Jacobsson: I am profoundly thankful for our friendship and free exchange of ideas. We met as two complete strangers and within a couple hours, we built the beginning of what I hope to be a lifelong friendship. This work would not reflect the lives of the women of rural Alaska without your teachings and stories. Truly, you are larger than life!

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This project would not have been possible without the initial efforts of Ms. Virginia Baim, who made time for setting things in motion with this project in the midst of her retirement from SAFE. Ginger, you are an asset to the Bristol Bay community and the state of Alaska. Your dedication to the field, compassion for human life, and your ability to approach life with a fine balance of humor and diligence are qualities I admire greatly.

I also wish to extend my deepest appreciation to Safe And Fear-free Environment (SAFE), whose dedication, wisdom, and leadership shaped the development of this project from start to finish. Lisa, Ginger, Marilyn, Danielle,

and Karen: No doubt you'll recall the occasional backlash that we encountered during the course of this project. Thank you for unwavering support and belief in me. To have worked under your tutelage and expertise is an honor and privilege. In the years to come, I hope that we may continue our relationship.

Finally, I must acknowledge and celebrate the never-ending contributions of Ms. Lisa Haggblom. Lisa, you are presented as a "gatekeeper" in this manuscript, but this role is minor compared to your role as a friend. Thank you for everything.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION*

- Ph.D.* Criminology, Law & Society, University of California, Irvine, 2016
Dissertation: *Of Salmon, Spirits, Silence, and Steam: An Analysis of Rural Alaska Native Survivors of Sexual Violence*
Advisor: Elliott Currie, PhD
- M.A.* Sociology, Illinois State University, 2010.
- B.A.* Psychology & English, Illinois State University, 2007 (graduated summa cum laude).

*Minor in German studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Evaluation Manager, Social Solutions International, Inc., Silver Springs, Maryland, January 2010-present

- Oversee technical aspects of all research and evaluation projects
- Maintain the highest standards of methodological rigor
- Analyze complex quantitative and qualitative datasets
- Manage performance measurement standards on evaluations
- Maintain and enhance business development activities, particularly research and evaluation opportunities
- Coordinate with multiple staff members, subcontractors, and consultants on task management
- Prepare complex documentation of research and evaluation activities, including results summaries, needs assessments, literature review, environmental/policy scans, and evaluation frameworks.

Teaching Assistant, Department of Criminology, Law & Society, University of California, Irvine, January 2011-present.

- Criminological Theory (undergraduate), *Winter 2011*
- Introduction to Criminology, Law & Society (undergraduate), *Spring 2011*
 - Lecturer for two discussion seminar sections
- Geographic Information Systems (undergraduate and graduate), *Fall 2011*
- Research Design (undergraduate) *Winter 2012*
 - Lecturer for one discussion seminar section

- Law & Modernity (undergraduate) *Spring* 2012
- Statistics II (graduate) *Winter* 2013
 - Lecturer for two lab sections
- Naturalistic Field Research (undergraduate) *Spring* 2013, *Fall* 2013
 - Lecturer for one discussion seminar section
- Crime and Public Policy (graduate) *Winter* 2014
- Statistics (graduate) *Spring* 2014, *Spring* 2015
- Law & Legal Institutions (graduate) *Fall* 2014
- Organizational Perspectives of the Legal System (graduate) *Winter* 2015
- Research Methods (graduate) *Winter* 2016

Statistical Consultant, University of Illinois, Chicago, 2009-2010.

- Provided data entry, management, analysis and reporting of crime surveillance technologies in metropolitan Chicago

CONSULTING WORK

Solano County Health and Social Services, Solano County, CA. *Women's Re-entry Achievement Program (WRAP)* (Contract No. 03402-14 A2). The WRAP evaluation will include baseline and follow up interviews and records based outcomes with 150 women participating in gender-responsive treatment during incarceration in county jail as well as other wraparound services upon release. The mission is to forge positive change in system delivery services to incarcerated persons and their families and to reduce recidivism and increase public safety in the Solano County community.

The Lloyd Society, Kensington, Maryland. *Examining the Health Impacts of Reuniting Incarcerated Women with their Children* (California Endowment Grant 20111994, Principal Investigator: Nena Messina). The goal of this project is to increase community awareness about the negative impacts of incarceration on children and families, and to advocate for programs and policies that restore familial relationships.

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Sacramento, CA. *Beyond Violence: A Prevention Program for Criminal-Justice Involved Women* (CDCR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT NO. 5600004087, Principal Investigator: Nena Messina). This study is a collaboration between the CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Center for Gender and Justice. The 12-month pilot study evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the Beyond Violence curricula delivered to women serving life sentences in two CA prisons. This curriculum is designed for women who have committed a violent/aggressive crime and are incarcerated. It is part of the gender-responsive and trauma-informed continuum of care. Outcomes measures include pre and post changes in mood, depression, PTSD, aggression, and violent tendencies.

The Lloyd Society, Kensington, Maryland. *Diverting Women Parolees From Prison: An Outcome Study of Health and Well-Being* (California Endowment Grant 20081206,

Principal Investigator: Nena Messina). This study evaluates the quality and effectiveness of treatment services received by women participating in the Second Chance Re-entry court program in Los Angeles County compared with women who were sentenced to prison.

AREAS OF INTEREST FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Sex Crimes/Offenders	Evaluative Research Methods
Rural Crime and Violence	Indigenous Violence Against Women and Children
Statistical Reasoning	International Justice Systems
Structural Crime Correlates	Issues of Alcohol, Addiction, and Crime

ADVANCED METHODOLOGICAL TRAINING

Inferential Statistics	Multi-level Modeling
Econometrics	Factor Analysis
Survey Methods	Structural Equation Modeling
General Linear Modeling	Qualitative Methods

ANALYSIS SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY

SPSS	MPlus
STATA	AMOS
SAS	HLM
Dedoose	

SCHOLARLY PRODUCTIVITY

A. Publications

1. Books/Book Chapters

Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2013). Toward a compliance model: Indian Supreme Court set to make revolution child rights. In N. P. Unnithan (Ed.) *Crime and Justice in India* (pp. 300-325). London: Sage.

2. Journal Articles-Peer Reviewed

Braithwaite, J., & Vandiver, D. (2016). A comparison of male and female sex offenders: Offense characteristics, victim profiles, and recidivism patterns. In preparation.

Arslan, H., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2016). Online sexual predators: A latent class analysis. In preparation.

Messina, N., **Braithwaite, J.**, Calhoun, S., & Kubiak, S. P. (2016). Examination of a violence prevention program for female offenders. *Violence and Gender*. Revise and Resubmit.

Vandiver, D., **Braithwaite, J.**, & Stafford, M. (2016). A longitudinal assessment of recidivism rates of female sexual offenders: Comparing recidivist and non-

- recidivists. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. Revise and Resubmit.
- Arslan, H., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2015). Online sex predators: A behavioral analysis of their chat logs. *Journal of Behavioral & Social Sciences*, 2(2), 65-79.
- Braithwaite, J.** (2015). Sexual violence in the backlands: Toward a macro-level understanding of rural sex crimes. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 27(5), 496-523.
- Messina, N., Calhoun, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2014). Gender responsive and trauma informed treatment decreases PTSD among women offenders. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 15(1), 6-23.
- Rabe-Hemp, C. E., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2013). An exploration of recidivism and the officer shuffle in police sexual violence (PSV). *Police Quarterly*, 16(2), 127-147.
- Shah, R., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2012). Spread too thin: Analyzing the effectiveness of the Chicago camera network on crime. *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*. DOI: 10.1080/15614263.2012.670031
- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2011). The effect of cognitive behavioral program for at-risk youth: changes in attitudes, skills, family, peer, and community relationships. *Victims and Offenders*, 6(1), 93-116.
- Vandiver, D. M., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2009). Male and female juvenile sex offenders: Examining recidivism rates as adults. *Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice and Psychology*, 3(1), 23-32.
- Walsh, J. A., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2008). Self-reported alcohol consumption and sexual behavior in males and females: Using the unmatched-count technique to examine reporting practices of socially sensitive subjects in a sample of university students. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 52(2), 49-72.
- 3. Scholarly Monographs/Technical Reports**
- Nemes, S., Woods, L., Lynch, A., **Braithwaite, J.**, Walker, E., & Pablos-Velez, X. (2016). Final report: CSR peer review evaluation study. Submitted to the Center on Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health. Contract No. HHSN268201300058C.
- Braithwaite, J.**, Calhoun, S., & Messina, N. (2015). Gender and Family Matters: Pre-sentence Report Review and Evaluation. Submitted to City of San Francisco Adult Probation Department. Contract No. APD 2014-01.
- Messina, N., Calhoun, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2015). Examining the Health Impacts of Reuniting Incarcerated Mothers with their Children. Submitted to The California Endowment. C# 20111994.

- Braithwaite, J., & Vandiver, D. M.** (2014). The missing link in sex offender treatment: Considering substance abuse as a criminogenic need. *Offender Programs Report, 18*(2), 17-20.
- Lynch, A., Jennings, H., Nemes, S., **Braithwaite, J.**, & Myers, C. (2013). Changing lives and countries one person at a time: Case studies of outcomes and impacts of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program in three sectors. Submitted to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Contract No. SAQMMA10C0334
- Evanson, H., Stier, K., Yoder, E., **Braithwaite, J.**, O'Donnell, K., Namur Karp, J., & Nemes, S. (2012). Bright futures for women's health initiative: Healthy relationships literature review and environmental scan. Submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Contract No. HSH250201000037
- Finley, C., **Braithwaite, J.**, Lynch, A., Nemes, S. (2012). Maryland tobacco quitline: CDC-CPPW stimulus funding 7-month evaluation report—Fiscal Years 2010-2011. Submitted to Alere Wellbeing, Inc.
- Belkofer, C., **Braithwaite, J.**, Lynch, A., Nemes, S. (2011). Maryland tobacco quitline: Comprehensive evaluation report, year 5—Fiscal Year 2011. Submitted to Alere Wellbeing, Inc.
- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2008). *Maximizing student learning through study-abroad programs: A faculty student perspective*. Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology
- Vandiver, D. M., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2007). *Evaluating Student Learning on a Study Abroad Trip: Employing Active Learning and Teaching in Russia*. Annual Illinois State University Symposium on Teaching and Learning.

4. Encyclopedia Entries

- Braithwaite, J.** (2014). Los Angeles Riots of 1992. In D. Jones-Brown & B. Frazier (Eds.), *African Americans and criminal justice: An encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press.

B. Internal Grants and Sponsored Research Projects

- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2010). *Internationalizing criminal justice graduate curriculum: Gauging student learning awareness and perspectives*. Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology Grant/ISU, \$2,000.
- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2008). *Maximizing student learning through study abroad programs: Evaluating autonomous learning on a study abroad trip to India*. Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology Grant/ISU, \$2,000.

Vandiver, D. M., & Braithwaite, J. (2007). *Evaluating student learning on study abroad trip to Russia*. Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology Grant/ISU, \$1,500.

C. Research Presentations (Peer-Reviewed)

a. International/National/State

Messina, N., Calhoun, S., & Braithwaite, J. (2015, March). *The impact of visitation transportation on families and children of incarcerated women*. Paper presented at the semi-annual meeting of the Association for Criminal Justice Research, Sacramento, CA.

Calhoun, S., & Braithwaite, J. (2014, November). *Examining the relationship between psychiatric medication compliance and criminal offending: Do criminogenic needs matter?* Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA.

Vandiver, D., & Braithwaite, J. (2013, October). *An Assessment of Re-Arrest Patterns of a Cohort of 471 Registered Female Sex Offenders*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Chicago, IL.

Messina, N., Calhoun, S., & Braithwaite, J. (2013, June). *Trauma-informed treatment decreases PTSD among women offenders*. Paper presented at the College of Problems on Drug Disorders, San Diego, CA.

Arslan, H., & Braithwaite, J. (2013, March). *The traces of online sexual predators in America*. Paper presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Dallas, TX.

Braithwaite, J. (2012, November). *Small town sexual violence: A macro-criminological approach*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, IL.

Calhoun, S., Messina, N., Jeter, K., & Braithwaite, J. (2012, March). *Diverting women offenders from prison: An evaluation of the Second Chance re-entry court program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, New York, NY.

Vandiver, D., & Braithwaite, J. (2012, March). *An Assessment of Re-Arrest Patterns of a Cohort of 471 Registered Female Sex Offenders*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, New York, NY.

Calhoun, S., Messina, N., Jeter, K., Braithwaite, J., & Torres, S. (2011, November). *Diverting women offenders from prison: An evaluation of the Second Chance re-entry court program*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Washington, D.C.

Messina, N., Calhoun, S. & Braithwaite, J. (2011, June). *Diverting women parolees from prison*. Oral presentation at the Los Angeles County Drug Court Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2010, November). *Toward a compliance model: Indian Supreme Court set to make revolution child rights*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA.
- Braithwaite, J.** (2010, October). *Exploring a recidivist population of police sexual violence offenders*. Paper presented at the semi-annual meeting of the Association for Criminal Justice Research (California), Huntington Beach, CA.
- Braithwaite, J.** (2009, March). *The double edge sword in the war on drugs: Evaluating the roles of the drug information in police investigation*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Boston, MA.
- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (November, 2008). *An evaluation of cognitive intervention program for at-risk youth: An assessment of dynamic risk factors*. Paper submitted for presentation at the meeting of the American Society of Criminology, St. Louis, MO.
- McBride, D. M., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2008, July). *Picture superiority in conceptual implicit memory tests*. Poster presented at the International Congress of Psychology meeting in Berlin, Germany.
- Braithwaite, J.** (2008, March). *An examination of recidivism rates of female sex offenders: A descriptive study*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Cincinnati, OH.
- Sweas, L., Reese-Weber, M., Herrmann, D., Ray, A. Faigao, D., **Braithwaite, J.**, & Nemecek, R. (2008, March). *Conflict strategies and levels of intimacy in short-moderate-, and long-term romantic relationships*. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Chicago, IL
- Vandiver, D. M., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2007, November). *Juvenile Female Sex Offenders: A Longitudinal Study of Recidivism Rates*. Presented at the Annual Meeting of American Society of Criminology: Atlanta, GA.
- Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2007, November). *Evaluation of the cognitive intervention program for at-risk youth in McLean County*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Atlanta, GA.
- Braithwaite, J.** (2007, September). *An examination of delineating factors in juvenile parricide: A content analysis of available newspaper reports*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Midwestern Criminal Justice Association, Chicago, IL.
- b. Local/University Level
- Braithwaite, J.**, & Vandiver, D. M. (2007, January). *Evaluating Student Learning on a Study Abroad Trip: Employing Active Learning and Teaching in Russia*. Annual Illinois State University Symposium on Teaching and Learning, Bloomington, IL.

Braithwaite, J. (2007, April). *Examining the picture superiority effect for implicit category production tasks*. Presented at the annual Psychology Honors Colloquium, Illinois State University.

c. Guest Lectures

Kethineni, S., & **Braithwaite, J.** (2010, March). *Global Crime*. Presented at Pekin Public Library's Great Decisions Programming and Discussion Series.

D. Briefings

Braithwaite, J., Myers, C., Nemes, S., & Lynch, A. (2014, August). *Application and Submission Experiences of New Investigators*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Subcommittee on Peer Review, Center for Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health.

E. Awards/Honors/Fellowships

Department of Criminology, Law and Society Master of Advanced Study Professional Development Fellowship, University of California Irvine, Spring 2016

- Fellowship awarded to pay tuition/fees plus a stipend for spring quarter 2016

Social Ecology Dean's Dissertation Writing Fellowship, Fall 2015 (\$11,268)

Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice (ADPCCJ) Fellowship, Spring 2015 (\$1,300)

Paul and Frances Dickman Graduate Student Research Award, Spring 2015 (\$1,500)

Graduate Division Public Impact Fellowship, 2014-2015

- Honorable mention award (\$1,000)

Department of Criminology, Law and Society Master of Advanced Study Professional Development Fellowship, University of California Irvine, Fall 2012

- Fellowship awarded to pay tuition/fees plus a stipend for fall quarter 2012

Department of Criminology, Law and Society Summer Research Grant, University of California Irvine, 2011-2014 (\$3,000)

School of Social Ecology Fellowship, University of California Irvine, Fall 2010

- Fellowship awarded to pay tuition/fees plus a stipend for fall quarter 2010

F. Ad Hoc Review

Violence and Victims

Journal of Criminal Justice Education

International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology

Journal of Interpersonal Violence
Violence and Gender

G. Professional Development

- 2010 Learning to Teach with Digitized Resources—Library of Congress
- 2006 Static-99: Evidence Based Sex Offender Assessment Training

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Of Salmon, Spirits, Silence, and Steam: A Qualitative Study of Sexual Violence in Rural Alaska

By Jeremy Braithwaite

Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology, Law and Society

University of California, Irvine 2016

Professor Elliott Currie, Committee Chair

The state of Alaska has the highest reported forcible rape rate in the United States, currently exceeding the national average three-fold. In 2012, about 80 crimes of rape were reported per 100,000 residents. Alaska Native women, who represent about 15 percent of the state's population, are disproportionately represented in the state rape rate, accounting for nearly two-thirds of reported cases each year. Despite these staggering statistics, empirical work examining the underpinnings of sexual violence among Alaska Native women remains quite scarce.

Though there is a burgeoning literature on violence against indigenous women living in Native communities or reservations, the majority of this literature is theoretical, relies on generic propositions, and undervalues the distinct differences among and within indigenous groups. In response to these lacunae, this dissertation examines violence, particularly sexual violence, against Alaska Native women in Bristol Bay, a rural region in the western part of the state. I employ a quasi-ethnographic study, involving a series of site visits, community observations, key informant interviews, and life histories with Alaska Native survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Findings suggest that understanding violence against women in this region must account for a complex backdrop of historical, cultural, political, and economic forces that have exerted profound shifts in the lives and livelihoods of men, women, families, and villages.

Transformations in the political and economic structures of this region have potentiated myriad cascading effects on Native family structure, work opportunities, interpersonal relationships, and cultural investment. These issues are germane to understanding to how and why women experience, respond to, and heal from traumatic experiences. Implications for recovery, intervention, and prevention at multiple levels are discussed, in addition to unique challenges posed to the discipline of criminology.

CHAPTER 1: THE WOMAN IN THE MOON

The history of Alaska Natives, prior to European contact in the 1800s, was almost exclusively an oral history, which relied immensely on oral accounts and retellings of events to preserve records of the past. Oral traditions shaped all aspects of social and cultural life in Alaska Native villages, including education, child rearing practices, survival, and perhaps most importantly, law and social control. Each society or village had storytellers, often village elders, who communicated the village history, norms, and ways of life to the rest of the village, especially children. Though storytelling varies in form and function from region to region and tribe to tribe, orators generally carefully select one piece from their past—a fond memory, a historical event, an emotional state, a lesson—to explain their view of the world and communicate what they hope their audience will incorporate into their own lives.

Before I go any further, I'd like to present a story retold to me by Desa, a 68-year old Yup'ik woman originally from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region of Western Alaska (and whom I will introduce in more detail in Chapter 3). I met Desa in May 2015 as I was in the midst of conducting fieldwork in Alaska for this project. Desa, among many other things, is a staunch advocate and activist for women's rights. She has a formidable presence throughout Alaska, well known for her uncompromising beliefs and disdain for corrupt politics, corporate greed, and most of all, the general attitude of dismissiveness of victims which she perceives as pervasive throughout Alaska. You don't want to cross Desa. In fact, on her computer desktop background is a photograph of her face-to-face with another woman in a public forum. In this photograph, you can tell Desa is furious. She is yelling at the other woman and pointing at her, not in an assaultive position, but more of a scolding manner, like a disappointed mother reprimanding her child. The woman with whom Desa is quarreling is Senator Lisa Murkowski. As Desa explained

it, they were embroiled in fierce argument over the recent reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Across Alaska, Native tribes were outraged when Murkowski inserted an “Alaska exemption” into this reauthorization, which effectively prevented Alaska tribes from prosecuting crimes of domestic violence and sexual assault committed on tribal lands, including those committed by non-Natives. In the photograph, she is calling out Murkowski on her position. “I shouted ‘Shame on you!’ in front of over 300 people,” Desa stated with pride.

A true “larger than life” character, Desa spent countless hours telling me her stories and experiences, from her childhood sexual abuse experiences to her attempted suicide to her work with a women’s shelter in rural Western Alaska to her hunger fasts while serving time in jail on charges of subsistence fishing violations to her candidacy in Alaska’s gubernatorial race in the late 1990s. She’s done it all. I could write a book on Desa alone. Maybe someday she’ll let me write her biography.

Sitting in her home one Saturday afternoon, sharing sandwiches and a big pot of what she calls “Eskimo coffee,” Desa and I chatted about issues of sexual violence against women in Alaska—theories about when it had begun, why it continues to lead the United States as the “rape capital,” and some of the state-sponsored movements that have attempted to raise awareness to the issue (all of which Desa believes are ill-informed and ineffective). Sitting across from me at her fireplace chain-smoking hand-rolled cigarettes, Desa casually asked “You know the story of the Woman in the Moon?”

“I don’t think I do,” I responded, trying to mask my ignorance. I hadn’t the slightest clue what she was talking about. For all I knew, *The Woman in the Moon* was some short-lived television show from the early 1970s a la *The Flying Nun*.

As the cherry of the cigarette in her mouth began to dim, Desa rolled another cigarette on the hearth as she briefed me on the background of the story. It was told to her by a village elder in the community she was raised. Because this is an oral story, there's no exact date of origin, but it's reasonable to expect this story pre-dated European/Western contact:

You know the story of the Woman in the Moon? Well, a woman who was born in the village of Chevak right on the Bering sea—a hop, skip and a jump away from the village I was born in—told me the story of a young Yup'ik woman who was walking on the tundra. And it was in the winter and she had on her wedding parka. Eventually, a man and his dog team came up to her and began to bother her. So she said he began to bother her and she became afraid and she started to run away from him. But instead of running toward her village, she ran away from it. And the man followed her. And she ran and she ran and the man chased after her still. And she ran for such a long time that eventually she became airborne and so did the man. And she ran in the air for such a long time that eventually, they both landed on the moon. And when the moon is full, you can look up and you'll see her running. And she'll be running for eternity with the man and the dog team running after her.

Desa remained somewhat coy (perhaps by design) about the meaning behind this Yup'ik-yarn, cautiously avoiding authoritative statements but instead probing for my thoughts on the story.

“What do you think this story is about?” The \$64,000 question.

I had learned that the indigenous Alaska peoples traditionally had no words for domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, or any of the legal derivatives. So the word “bother” was used in place of that. I recalled having spoken to an Alaska rape shelter director a couple of years prior and her having told me a story about a Native girl whose uncle had been molesting her and when she reported him to the authorities, had remarked “My uncle is bothering me.”

“It's a story of sexual abuse?” I offered.

“It could be,” she remarked with trailing ambiguity. “Now, why would the Natives have a story like that if their villages weren't already having some kind of problem?” she countered.

I was stumped. Everything that I had read on the subject of violence, addiction, suicide, and numerous other woes facing Native communities today situates the legacies of colonization and historical trauma as a fundamental cause to issues of Native health and wellness today. Desa's story, which takes place pre-Contact, doesn't fit well within this dominant theoretical framework. Perplexed, I waxed and waned over some potential explanations: maybe there was a problem with sexual abuse in Native villages pre-Contact, but nowhere near what it has become today? Maybe the story has nothing to do with sexual abuse or violence, period? To each of these questions, Desa gave the same equivocal response. *Could be.*

Throwing me a bone, Desa conveyed the primary takeaway of *The Woman in the Moon* with this somewhat ominous warning. "The elders teach that if you're faced with a crisis or you have a problem or you have a question and you need an answer, that solution lies in your village. If you don't seek out that answer or solution in your village, you'll end up like the woman in the moon."

To borrow from Charles Dickens, this story is to be distinctly understood and interrogated or nothing of a value can come of the stories of victimized women that I share in this dissertation. This project examines Alaska Native women who have been victims, at one point or another, of violence. All had been victims of sexual violence, either during childhood or adulthood (or both, as was the case for most women) and many had also been victims of intimate partner violence, as well as having histories of child abuse and neglect. Almost all of them had a history of alcoholism or substance abuse. Many come from families where issues of violence and addiction are so prevalent across multiple generations, these issues have come to be viewed as "par for the course" or even expected. Some are in recovery, in healthy and safe relationships, and in long-term sobriety. Others are still struggling to make it from day to day. All recognized

the pervasiveness of the problem among their Native brothers and sisters and the need for some sort of action or movement to end this problem. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the problem of violence against Alaska Native women through the individual and collective voices of survivors, with a particular focus on contextual and causal forces operating at multiple layers of influence, including families, communities, organizations, and laws/policies. The question is rather simple: What has happened in Alaska Native communities to fuel the endemic problem of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women? What follows, however, is not a simple answer, but an extraordinarily complex (and at times, counter-intuitive) phenomenology. From this point forward, I will begin to unpack this phenomenology.

CHAPTER 2: RAPE CAPITAL

The Problem

This is study of violence, particularly sexual violence, against indigenous women living in rural Alaska. Alaska indisputably has a rape problem. In 2004, an alarming report revealed that 20.9% (or one in five) of all women in Alaska had been the victims of one or more completed forcible rapes during their lifetime (Ruggiero & Kilpatrick, 2004). According to the FBI's 2014 Crime in the United States report, Alaska reported an average of 104.7 rapes per 100,000 inhabitants, nearly three times the national average of 38.5. In 2010, the Alaska Victimization Survey, released by the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center, reported about half of all Alaska women were subjected to some form sexual violence, domestic violence, or both at some point in their lives. Much to the state's chagrin, Alaska has acquired a reputation as the "rape capital" of the United States.

It is well established that anyone can be a victim of rape, regardless of gender, race, age, socio-economic status, religious identification, geographic location or any other demographic marker. Alaska is no exception. In Ruggiero's and Kilpatrick's (2004) study, rape victimization is distributed across all age brackets, racial categories, and income levels. The Alaska Victimization Survey, which has been conducted annually since 2011 across various Alaska regions, has shown that rates of lifetime prevalence of sexual violence and intimate partner violence are similar among urban and rural parts of the state. Yet, as with all crimes, certain segments of the population are more affected than others. Unequivocally, Alaska Native women are overrepresented in Alaska's rape statistics. Alaska Natives, who comprise approximately 15% of Alaska's population, constitute roughly 60% of total reported rapes each year (Amnesty International, 2007).

It is not particularly abnormal that Alaska's Native women are overrepresented in its violent crime figures. Nationally, indigenous women are more likely to experience sexual assault crimes compared to all other races, with an estimated one in three Native women reporting having been raped during at some point in her life (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Regardless of how data on sexual violence is conceptualized, measured, and collected, various national and local sources have concluded that American Indian/Alaska Native women experience sexual violence at alarming rates. Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) indicate that the rate of rape and sexual assault victimization against indigenous women is at least twice as large as rates for other women. From 1992 to 2005, the average annual rate for American Indian/Alaska Native women was five per 1,000 women age 12 and over compared to a rate of two per 1,000 for both White and African American women. According to the National Violence Against Women Survey, 34% of American Indian/Alaska Native women had experienced a completed or attempted rape in their lifetimes, compared to 18% of White, 19% of African American, and 7% of Asian women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Research employing local- and community-based samples has also revealed high intimate partner violence prevalence among this population. For instance, Malcoe, Duran, and Montgomery (2004) found that prevalence of lifetime and past-year intimate-partner violence among a convenience sample of Oklahoma Tribal women were 59% and 30%, respectively. A study of American Indian women living on a Southwest reservation found that 31% reported having experienced any type of intimate violence within the past year, and 91% reported any violence in their lifetimes (Robin, Chester, & Rasmussen, 1998). Research conducted in institutional settings, such as domestic violence shelters and substance abuse treatment centers, reveals even high rates. For example, Norton and Manson (1995) found that 38% of American

Indian clientele current residing at a domestic violence shelter had experienced completed partner rape and 12% reported a completed or attempted partner rape within the previous year. Likewise, a study of American Indian women completing substance abuse treatment found that over two-thirds (more than 67%) of respondents had been victims of some form of sexual abuse during their lives (Saylor & Diliparthi, 2006). In sum, whether we are examining the issue using national- versus locally-generated samples or from setting-specific (i.e. emergency room, treatment center, etc.) versus general community/population samples, the findings unanimously point to the same conclusion: violence against indigenous women is unacceptably high.

The Theories

Scholars have attempted to situate violence against indigenous women as a social crisis rooted in systems of proximal and distal factors at individual, interpersonal/familial, organizational, community, and legal/socio-political levels. The majority of these studies have employed singular levels of analyses to examine this issue, despite intense theoretical debate advocating for a multi-layered social ecological approach to understanding violence against indigenous women (Oetzel & Duran, 2004).

Across all ethnic groups, biological sex, age, socio-economic status, and substance use/misuse have been identified as primary risk factors for sexual and domestic violence. There is no denying that women are overwhelmingly more likely to experience this form of violence compared to men¹, with younger women, about age 16 to 24 (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007), as well as poorer, less educated, welfare-dependent women (Bassuk, Dawson & Huntington, 2006; McEachern, Van Winkle, & Steiner, 1998) experiencing substantially higher levels of violence. Numerous studies have characterized alcohol use and misuse, by

¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men were the victim of a completed or attempted rape or sexual assault in 2013.

perpetrators, victims or both, as closely tied to high levels of sexual and intimate partner violence. Scholars have estimated that approximately 50% of crimes of violence against women involve alcohol use by one or more parties (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996), and leading to impairments in a person's psychological, cognitive and motor skills which result in lowered inhibitions and heightened aggression. Likewise, Kunitz, Levy, McCloskey, & Gabriel (1998) characterized alcohol addiction as an independent risk factor of both being a perpetrator and victim of interpersonal violence.

Indigenous communities, by and large, can be said to hold these so-called individual determinants of violence against women in spades, where high rates of poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, and educational deficiencies are much higher than for the rest of the U.S. population (Sandefur & Liebler, 1997; Wells & Falcone, 2008). Scholars have implicated these risk factors as the primary cause of violence in Native communities, including rural Alaska villages (Feldstein, Venner, & May, 2006; Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002). Ruggiero and Kilpatrick (2004) found that Alaskan women with extremely low incomes of less than \$5,000 per year had the highest risk of rape, while women with incomes \$50,000 and more had the lowest risk. Chester, Robin, Koss, Lopez, and Goldman (1994) argued that the sharp increase in interpersonal violence in Indian country was the product of excessive alcohol use in Indian Country. Albrecht (1981) concluded in his study of Bethel, Alaska that “almost all public safety problems—interpersonal violence, family quarrels, accidental fires, exposure, injury, drowning—have their origins in alcohol abuse (pp. 14-15). Shinkwin and Pete (1983) noted in their study of wife battering in rural villages of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta that “95% of abusers are problem drinkers and respondents insist that wife beating incidents are alcohol related” (p. 90). Shepherd's (2001) study of battered women in Alaska's North Slope Borough

implicated alcohol and illicit substances as highly abundant in the region (despite the tightening of local ordinances) and largely tied to instances of domestic and sexual assault. However, Shepherd also notes that women in her study pointed out that abuse occurred in the absence of alcohol, as well.

Issues of disadvantage, addiction, and violence are also compounded by a number of physical and geographic barriers that are quite unique to rural Alaska, including the geographic isolation of communities, severe weather, and lack of adequate law enforcement and social services agencies. Physical and social isolation almost always arises in any discussion of life in rural Alaska. As the largest of the United States (measuring approximately two and a half times the size of Texas) and the third least populated (after Vermont and Wyoming), more than half of the state's population is housed in Anchorage, with the balance peppered across the rest of the Alaskan landscape. About ninety percent of these places are not connected via interstate or road system; the only way to travel to them is by air or sea. One is very much at the mercy of climate when traveling throughout Alaska. For instance, the community of St. Paul Island, a volcanic island located in the Bering Sea, 800 miles from Anchorage and 500 miles from Siberia, is only accessible three times per week via flight from Anchorage. The weather in this region is such that flights can be delayed for days due to dense fog. Being prepared for multi-day delays in both arriving and leaving this community is a must. This degree of isolation creates a significant barrier in the event of emergencies, including natural/manmade disasters, acute health conditions, and of course, criminal victimization. Many Alaskan women reside in villages that have virtually no law enforcement presence. For many, their only recourse (from a formal reporting perspective) is to telephone the state troopers and "wait things out." Response time in these areas is not measured in minutes, but hours and, in some cases, days.

Similarly, the lack of social services and treatment for abusers and victims, alike, is also a significant issue in rural Alaska. Shepherd's (2001) study of domestic violence victims in the northern rural Alaska found that a residential alcohol treatment program and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support groups could be accessed in the regional center, while in the surrounding villages, mental and behavioral health services are scarce. Shinkwin and Pete (1983) noted similar issues in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region of western Alaska, in that victims bore the primary responsibility for managing their abuse in the absence of formal services and interventions for batterers and victims.

If alcohol abuse, pervasive structural disadvantage, and the absence of recourse for victims were the sole factors responsible for violence against women in rural Alaska, there wouldn't be much need to pursue a rigorous study, for these issues have been well-examined and well-established. Yet, a burgeoning literature on the problems facing Native communities has begun to take a different road, situating violence, alcohol abuse and addiction, and myriad other social ills, including suicide, gambling addiction, and child neglect, as *collectively symptomatic* of broader sociological phenomena that profoundly impact Native norms, culture, and way of life. Theoretical scholarship has painted violent crime as an unavoidable by-product of the modernization process, whereby societies (especially communities characterized by rural economy) that have become disrupted by modern technology, new values, or shifts in economic organization turn to violent crimes as a "natural" response to periods of uncertainty, transition, and normlessness (Huggins, 1985). Additionally, a related school stresses the disrupting effects of economic and political incorporation (facilitated by political or legal coercion) of small communities into national or even global systems, thus reinforcing the "neo-colonial" status of Native groups in larger society (see generally: Dryzek & Young, 1985; Marenin, 1992). Whether

examining Native crime from the perspective of modernization versus economic/political incorporation, the point to made is that the social crises facing Native communities and villages today (whether the topic is crime, alcoholism, suicide, etc.) are rooted in people's exploitation and powerlessness. As Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) caution, "sexual and other violence against women in Native communities must be understood in the context of White supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, and economic exploitation of marginalized communities, not as if such violence is inherent in culture" (p. 47).

In Alaska specifically, there is little doubt that cultural dislocation, economic underdevelopment, Western influence, alcohol abuse, and violence against women are facts that coalesce in Native communities and villages. But the problem with these theoretical propositions is that they are, as the name conveys, theoretical. They are quite generic and undervalue distinct differences that exist across Native peoples, Tribes, and communities. LaPrairie (1988) sums this up well in claiming "the outcome of dependency and colonialism and what it means for present-day Native societies is difficult to understand and document within existing theoretical formulations" (pp. 379-380). Understanding how Native societies and social structures evolved over time, therefore, is crucial to understanding modern individual- and community-level traumas. Anthropologists have termed approaches to studying cultural or local-based phenomena as *emic* (as opposed to *etic*), in form and function. In studies employing an *etic* framework, the discussion is framed in terms of a scientific, universalist frame of reference, with framing of the issues discussed from a vantage point *external* to the categories, discourses, and experiences of the specific population under inquiry. *Emic* approaches, on the other hand, focus on bringing members of the specific population and their perceived realities to light. In the context of the current study, an approach predicated on an *emic* framework attempts to recreate for the reader

what it is like for a Native woman living in rural Alaska, how she experiences violence, addiction, and other personal traumatic issues, and most importantly, how women make meaning of these experiences.

Another peculiar phenomenon exists in the current literature on the subject of violence against indigenous women. By and large, the very women that are affected by these problems—the women themselves—have been neglected. The Native man has been examined, as a perpetrator of violence or a culturally-displaced member of the community. The white race has also been examined, as a symbol of modernizing or neo-colonial forces permeating Native communities. Very little empirical work, however, has centered on the Native woman. Issues of identity have been ignored, except to say that she is a Native woman, likely living in poverty and/or unemployed. Her relationship with place is obscure, other than that she likely lives in a geographically isolated community with minimal, if any, law enforcement presence. Knowledge of her experiences with victimization is usually limited to proximate factors, such as whether she, her perpetrator (or both) were drinking at the time of the crime, whether a weapon was involved, and whether hers was a one-time-only event or part of a chronic pattern of abuse. Perhaps most importantly, how she responds to these particularly harrowing experiences continues to evade us, apart from the superficial statistics suggesting high rates of under-reporting. In short, what little is known about Alaska Native women who have been victims of sexual violence is derived from purely etic frames of reference. What they consider meaningful and important remains absent. They are, in fact, the missing link in their own communities. In response to these lacunae, I focused my efforts on understanding violence against Alaska Native women, specifically Native women of the Bristol Bay region of rural western Alaska,

emphasizing the importance of privileging local custom, meaning and belief as primary to arriving at a deep, nuanced understanding of this problem.

The Study

My interest in pursuing a study of sexual violence in rural Alaska began roughly in 2012. At this point in my PhD program, I had been putting the finishing touches on my second year project—a quantitative study of sex crimes in rural communities across the United States, which involved numerous multivariate models regressing “the usual suspect” indicators of community social disorganization (i.e. poverty, unemployment, divorce rates, community vacancy rates, racial heterogeneity, and so on) on rates of different types of sex crimes (e.g. alcohol-induced rape, child sexual abuse, crimes occurring in unmonitored/open access areas, etc.). As I was collecting additional citations to strengthen my literature review, I came across some news sources on Alaska’s high rape rate. A quick google search “Alaska Rape” yielded stories headlining the phrases such as “rape capital,” “rape epidemic,” and “most dangerous place for women.” Reporters and freelance writers had taken notice of the issue, to be certain. As I read stories appearing in popular outlets, including *The Atlantic*, *CNN Opinion*, and *Business Insider*, the researcher in me starting questioning whether the harrowing accounts of women’s victimization and exploitation were simply a reflection of the most extreme cases (i.e. sensationalist stories), or did these stories represent a microcosm of sexual violence in rural Alaska? An extremely limited theoretical and empirical literature base on the subject piqued my curiosity and motivation to pursue things further. Over the next two years, I began making calls. I reached out to women’s shelters, police and state troopers, forensic nurses, university researchers—anyone who might have come into contact with Alaskan women affected by this epidemic and might give me some insight into what still needs to be known on the subject. All

had divergent experiences and opinions on the matter, but all insisted, unequivocally, that there was no “silver bullet” to explaining the extraordinary magnitude and severity of violence against women in Alaska. The problem was much more complex than the tragic caricatures presented by the media let on.

When I first began, numerous people told me I would never get a project like this approved by the faculty, the graduate division, or the Institutional Review Board of my university. Frequently, I was reminded by fellow students and professors of the extremely sensitive nature of the subject matter and just how difficult it would be for an outsider (and a white male to boot) to gain access to and acceptance among this population. Naturally, I began to consider strategies of focusing my efforts in a way that would distance me from the subject matter. *Maybe I'll do a secondary analysis of violence against Alaska Native women using traditional crime statistics, like police or court records?* It was tempting, indeed, to simply replicate what I had already done for a previous project and substitute the appropriate variables to model and explain victimization in rural Alaska. A number of issues quickly dawned on me. My previous study basically yielded null effects across the board, limiting my ability to really say anything substantial about the context of sexual violence in rural communities. Technical issues factored largely into this—the sampling frame was limited, the measurement of key indicators was less than ideal, and most importantly, I wasn't able to capture incidents *not* reported to the police, thus limiting my conclusions about sex crimes in rural communities to only those reported to police. Though I was unaware of the exact percentage of women that don't report crimes of rape and sexual assault in rural Alaska, I assumed it must have been at least as high as the national average (consistently estimated at approximately 66%), but likely higher as Lewis (2008) suggests. Choosing this route meant I would simply have to accept that as a

limitation. Not good enough. An inquiry of this type requires an in-depth understanding that only can be furnished first-hand by people experiencing this type of violence.

Maybe I can do an in-depth study of violence against women in Alaska, but I'll just ignore the cultural context of the problem? I now cringe when I think that this actually entered my mind. Not only is it impossible to “ignore culture,” it is a disservice to the field. To ignore or skate past issues of Alaska Native race, culture, and heritage in a study of sexual violence in rural Alaska is akin to, say, studying the dynamics of mass incarceration in the United States and leaving out any discussion of Black men or racial inequality. It is impossible to meaningfully discuss one issue and not the other. Inevitably, this lead some people to assume that I had conflated acts of violence and gender inequality more broadly to the beliefs and traditions of Alaska Native culture, promulgated by popular stereotype. *They do that because it's part of their culture.* Let me head this off at the pass immediately by stating that sexual violence, domestic violence, and substance abuse and addiction are not and never have been part of the Alaska Native culture or way of life. They have never been sanctioned practices, nor accepted as legally or morally right. One of the key informants I spoke to numerous times before and during my fieldwork, a former director of a rural Alaska women's shelter, told me about a court case that involved the sexual abuse of minor children by an elderly local man in the community:

What goes in villages, the chances are overwhelming that you're being abused by someone you know and probably in your biological family. What makes that go on in rural Alaska? We know it is not traditional. There was a famous case out in Bethel about an older native man who was molesting native boys. And the defense that was mounted was that what he did was traditional in that what he did was traditional sex play that happens between men and boys in the *qasgiq* (men's house) and that everyone was making a big deal out of something that was a cultural norm. And of course, the Native community went *WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? No! It has never been a part of our culture.* Was, say, pants-ing each other and that kind of thing in the men's house common? Yes, just as it is anywhere else. But that has nothing to do with an older person who was using their position as an elder to have kids hold still while they diddled

them. There's no confusion in our mind about the difference between the two—don't you dare come in here and say this is a sanctioned practice!

As I systematically worked through various scenarios and possibilities for executing this study, I received a reply to an email that I had sent to a domestic violence/sexual assault shelter in Dillingham, Alaska several months prior. I had been sending canned emails requesting opportunities to speak by phone to agencies and professionals all throughout Alaska for a while at that point and had lost track of all who I had contacted. The reply was from Ginger, the executive director of Safe and Fear-free Environment (SAFE), the shelter that serves the Bristol Bay region of western Alaska (discussed more in Chapter 3). Ginger had been in the process of retirement and relocation at the time I had reached out to her, and as such, was stretched pretty thin, time-wise. Ginger did, however, state that she recognized the importance of the research I was proposing and connected me with Lisa, whom she introduced as the creator and coordinator of the regional sexual assault response team with experience serving hundreds of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. Lisa became the “gatekeeper” of the quasi-ethnographic study that unfolded over the next year (discussed more in Chapter 3).

Initial Observations

Few would argue that sexual violence is one of the most traumatic types of criminal victimization, affecting one's physical, mental, and spiritual functioning and wellness. While crime victims generally find it difficult to discuss their victimization, survivors of sexual abuse find it especially trying. Part of this is due to the natural taboo against speaking about sexual matters (abusive or non-abusive), but the more substantial obstacle concerns the emotional distress experienced by victims of sexual violence as a result of trauma, humiliation, and even fear of retaliation. As such, there are warranted concerns against asking people to discuss these experiences (Becker-Blease & Freyd, 2006). Given the difficulties of discussing sexual violence,

as well as the rural axiom that small towns are less trusting of outsiders, I worried that rural women may not be willing to discuss these experiences.

What surprised me is just how open some women had been in my everyday encounters. Upon my arrival in Anchorage, I spent my first couple of weeks of fieldwork at the Sockeye Inn (does it get more Alaskan than that?), an extended stay motel that caters largely to the imported Alaska labor workforce. Given that 95% of the clientele at this hotel are long-term residents (some had been almost a year when I'd met them), there was a strong air of camaraderie. Within a couple of days, I knew everyone on my floor by name, home town and state, and occupation. The shared kitchen space was the heart of social life at this hotel. Chances were, even if you were just using the kitchen to prepare a quick pot of coffee or heat a bag of microwave popcorn, you'd encounter at least one or two people. Introductory dialogues with people usually consisted of two questions: *Who are you? What brings you to Alaska?* At this point, I was a pretty open book about my research intentions. *I'm here from Southern California working on my graduate degree, studying violence against Native women in the rural Alaska villages.*

Take Ola, a heavy-set woman in her early 50s who was staying at the motel because a fire had recently claimed her home and took up temporary residence at the Sockeye Inn during the rebuild. Ola was quite interested in my work and she wasted no time telling me about her experiences as a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault. Originally a Native Hawaiian woman from the island of Niihau, Ola discussed some particularly graphic experiences with a string of abusive boyfriends, believing there to be some remarkable parallels between Alaska and Hawaii. Rose, an African American woman originally from Kansas, was working as a construction management contractor in Anchorage. Rose and I became quick friends with shared cooking interests, spending hours at the kitchen table discussing recipes and ways to adapt them

to the very limited cooking resources available at the motel. One evening, I ran into Rose as she was putting the finishing touches on a fresh pot of chicken and wild rice soup. She invited me to join her for dinner at the small, off-kilter kitchen table and I obliged. As we made small talk, Rose occasionally stared pensively into space. Something was on her mind.

“You know, I’ve been thinking a lot about the work you’re doing up here,” she stated after brief silence. “I really think the women you end up talking to will appreciate the opportunity you’re giving them.”

“You really think so? In what way?”

“I don’t know, it’s just...you know, because I was raped by a babysitter when I was ten years old. Molested by an older brother, too. And I really never talked about all that crap through with anyone, not till I was much older. Hindsight’s 20/20, I know, but I think a lot about that. Like maybe if I had a safe person to talk to, I wouldn’t have gotten messed up like I did for a while,” she mused. “How’s the soup? Not too bland?”

I didn’t pry into the short- and long-term impacts of Rose’s sexual abuse to which she alluded, mainly because she had closed the subject as quickly as she initiated it. She may have experienced depression, anxiety, internalizing/externalizing behaviors, substance abuse, or even attempted suicide. I’ll never know. But the point I wish to make here is quite simple. Rose and Ola both offered a fleeting glimpse into their violent pasts—unrehearsed and of their own volition. Why they entrusted me with the privilege of hearing their stories of abuse, I can’t be certain. I don’t believe it was because they perceived me as a sage man that could help them make sense of these issues, nor do I believe that they freely discuss their experiences with just anyone. One thing of which I can be fairly certain is that Ola and Rose wanted acknowledgement—for themselves and similarly-situated women. Even though Ola and Rose

did not fit the “inclusion criteria” for this study (they were not rural Alaska Native women), I present these preliminary interactions as confirmation of my hunch that there exist women that *are* ready to discuss these experiences outside of formal settings.

Throughout the course of my interviews with the women who are the focus of this study, I continued to observe this drive to speak out—as one woman described it, “mentally taking out the trash.” I was especially struck by their emotional state in speaking about their rather disturbing and quite graphic experiences, very much at odds with what I had expected and what various professionals that became aware of my work with this population had worried about. One would expect that such a seemingly intrusive, nerve-touching discussion about memories of personal violation and trauma would undoubtedly re-open old scars, evoke post-traumatic stress symptoms, and leave women with all too familiar feelings of sadness, anger, fear, and hopelessness. And yet, I found myself in awe of how women discussed themselves, their families, and their experiences. Of course, some women were in tears as they recalled certain parts of their lives; they squeezed a stress ball, cracked their knuckles, avoided eye contact, drew deep breaths, perspired, fiddled with their hair, and clenched their fists. They expressed anger, outrage, and wishes for vengeance for loved ones that violated them, families that turned a blind eye to them, and a criminal justice system that dismissed them. But this was certainly not the only way women presented.

Some women presented their lives and experiences with wry humor, lacing narratives of abuse, violation and addiction with dry caustic wit and even racy innuendo. Others spoke in a manner that can be best described as “business-as-usual.” Personal traumas and horrors were discussed as part-and-parcel of one’s life. For these women, traumatic experiences were discrete events, with a definite beginning and end. Others wanted to engage in a dialogue with me. After I

took women through the informed consent process and presenting them with a copy of my business card, some women viewed me as an authoritative figure on the subject. The fact that I had published research on the topic of sexual violence (some women even took the liberty to Google these articles) imbued me with a sense of legitimacy. As such, they had questions of their own. Quid pro quo, of sorts. *Why do they do it? What is going through their minds when they rape women? Is it because they're just desperate? Do women have rights? Will things ever change around here?* My dialogue with Liz illustrates this point very well. Liz was quite eager to participate in this study and, like other women, she treated the interview process as more of an exchange rather than a strict question-answer session. Even before taking Liz through the consent process, she immediately served the first question. A rather big one.

“I’m just curious, because you said you’re studying the causes of rape, right?” she asked with a half grin.

“Yes, that’s right,” I replied casually, even though I wasn’t exactly comfortable with the causal phrasing; this was no time to fuss over technical semantics.

“Well, you *do* know that the guys that rape are the cause of rape right?”

“Oh y-yes, of course,” I hastily replied, panicked that I already set a negative tone by presenting as a man who thought rapists were not solely responsible for their crimes. Better explain myself thoroughly before she loses faith in the value of participating in the study. “What I’m trying to....”

“Oh! You know that too?!” Liz replied, seemingly in shock. “Cuz I just learned that about a year ago! I had no idea. Isn’t that crazy?! Shit.”

Liz, it turns out, was not charging me with misogyny or chauvinism, but rather, she was eager to demonstrate this newly-acquired knowledge on violence and victimization. At 38 years

old, Liz had finally learned she was not responsible for her abuse. Telling me so filled her with a sense of empowerment.

Let me clear the air here. Sexual abusers, whether we are talking about serial rapists, intimate partner rapists, or child molesters, are 100% responsible for the pain they inflict on others. Victims are never to blame. This was my opinion coming into this project and it remains so. Frankly, I think it is a sad reflection on society that we are still reminding ourselves of this, well over 40 years after influential activists and scholars laid the groundwork for women's liberation and sexual rights. Clearly, there is still work to be done. That being said, this doesn't mean that we can't learn something of value and utility from those women that have gone through these experiences.

CHAPTER 3: THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE IS A STORY

Qualitative research methods, generally, and ethnographies more specifically, seek to understand the types and range of peoples' behaviors through studying them in their natural environments and settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In the context of this study, I had set out to understand how victims of sexual violence take and make meaning in their experiences and interactions with others. This approach, termed "symbolic interactionism," is derived from immersion in the daily lives and natural settings of people. Geertz (1983) asserts that such approaches employ "thick description"—a rich, detailed description of the specifics that detail the context and meaning of events and scenes that are relevant to those involved with them. The context of these descriptions, mostly informed by the narratives supplied by respondents, is as important as the descriptions themselves. Emerson (1983) suggests that fieldwork of this variety "compels the [researcher] to comprehend and illuminate the subject's view and to interpret the world as it appears to him" (p. 14). Ethnography, therefore, is a long process, requiring the researcher to spend much time with a group of people whilst living among those people in order to establish something of importance about the culture.

The term "quasi-ethnography" (indicating a deviation from a "pure ethnography") evokes a similar methodology consisting of in-depth interviews and detailed observations toward the goal of describing a culture in terms of meanings and interpretations of the people under study. The ability to become fully immersed in the social world under study, however, is the point of departure from pure ethnography. A pure, classically-trained ethnographer would no doubt argue that the amount of time immersed in the field and extent to which I was engaged with participants could not be described as "extended." Not only was this study executed in a six

month timeframe,² but also involved multiple, intermittent site visits, as opposed to a single sustained immersion in the field. The principal reason for this was to maintain relative anonymity in the community. Existing in the community as an unknown—floating into the community on and off throughout the timeframe of the study³—played to my advantage in meeting and recruiting women for the study. One of the defining characteristics of rural social life (for Native and non-Native communities, alike) is the high level of acquaintance density, meaning that most residents have some level of familiarity with others in the community. The lack of anonymity, and therefore minimal chance of confidentiality in reporting violent victimization (especially sexual violence), is one of the largest challenges facing women that are sexually assaulted in a rural community (Lewis, 2008). Dillingham and the outlying villages are no exception. As one participant noted: “not only does everyone know everyone else here, but most of us are related to each other.” The extent to which people are entwined in this community, therefore, presents a substantial barrier to talking about issues facing its people (a point which I will discuss at length later). To that end, my status as an “outsider” with no ties to the community or the people living in it motivated women to participate for two primary reasons. First, they were at greater ease knowing that I had no ties to any of the prominent families in their respective communities, was not enmeshed in tribal or corporate politics, and had no specific agenda for wanting to speak to them.⁴ The interviews provided a forum where women

² Wolcott (1999) describes an ideal ethnographic study term of two years. On this basis alone, it could be argued that the current study could not be described as purely ethnographic.

³ Despite the intermittent site visits, I still became known to some of the community members. In a tight knit community such as this, it was not uncommon to go to the grocery store, post office, or airport and start a casual conversation with someone who recognized me from a previous visit (e.g. “Hey, you were in town about a month ago, weren’t you?”).

⁴ The majority of women had some degree of ongoing involvement with the criminal court system, behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment, child welfare services, or a combination of these. Knowing that I was not organizationally or professionally connected with any of these entities seemed to be of some relief to some women, putting them at greater ease in providing uncensored answers to the interview questions.

could articulate their uncensored stories and experiences with perpetrators without fear of those stories indirectly getting back to the perpetrator—a common dynamic of the social exchange in this community. Second, numerous women discussed feelings of judgment and condemnation in the community because of their traumatic experiences. The classic “blaming the victim” syndrome is indeed prevalent in this community, as women’s experiences will portray in Chapter 7. Though I attempted to quell potential fears by making it clear that the interview process would be a non-judgmental conversation, most women did not bring this baggage with them to the interview. The majority, in fact, explicitly stated at the start that they were not concerned about my opinion of them. As one participant bluntly but succinctly put it, she didn’t “give a shit” what my opinion of her was.⁵

I also undertook elements of feminist research methods. As a quasi-ethnographic study, the methodology I adopted was not designed to offer an objective understanding of sexual violence experienced by Native women. Rather, the design of this study was developed to present sexual violence through the eyes of women who have experienced it. In acknowledging the authenticity of women’s everyday experiences, this approach documents the lives and activities of women, understanding their experiences from their own point of view, and conceptualizes their behavior as an expression of social, cultural, organizational, and even legal contexts. At the epistemological layer of understanding, I follow the approach utilized by other rural ethnographers.⁶

⁵ Yuan, Koss, Polacca, and Goldman (2006) acknowledged the likelihood of lack of candor among indigenous women in disclosing abusive incidents when women were interviewed by members of their own tribe, particularly when the tribe was “characterized by social unrest and political infighting among tribal members at the time of data collection” (p. 1586).

⁶ Websdale’s (1995) ethnography of domestic violence in rural Kentucky shares similar goals of feminist ethnography.

BRISTOL BAY

The Bristol Bay region of Southwest Alaska, covering approximately 40,000 square miles (roughly the size of Ohio), is pristine wild country stretching across tundra and wetlands and crisscrossed with numerous rivers that splinter out of the Bay. There are no precise geographic boundaries of the Bristol Bay region. It is generally accepted that the combined areas of the Dillingham Census Area, the Bristol Bay Borough, and the Lake and Peninsula Borough constitute Bristol Bay (see Figure 3.1), as all these areas fall under the purview of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation. Approximately 8,000 people are permanent residents of the Region, 66 percent of whom are Alaska Native (primarily Yup'ik Eskimo, Aleut, and Athabascan Indian).

Figure 3.1: *Bristol Bay Region*



At the mouth of the Nushagak River (an inlet of the Bristol Bay waters) lies Dillingham, the regional hub of over 30 remote villages. There are no traffic lights in Dillingham, and no highways or interstates leading into or out from it. The only way to access Dillingham is by airplane or boat. Daily airline service via PenAir links Dillingham and Anchorage, and transportation scheduled between villages and Dillingham is managed by local air carriers, supplemented by boats in the summer and snowmobiles in the winter. The only roads for automobile travel exist between Dillingham and Drifter Sound and between Halibut Point and Silver Cove. Ocean barges deliver most fuel, building materials, furniture, and other bulk items. Dillingham has no shopping malls, no multi-plex movie theaters, no gyms or health clubs, no coffee shops, and, until last year when Subway was introduced to the area, no fast food restaurants. There is one airport (with only one commercial air carrier providing service to Anchorage), one hospital, one post office, one community center, one library, and one school that includes kindergarten through twelfth grade (as well as a private church school). There is only one cellular service carrier that serves the Bristol Bay area and many residents expressed dissatisfaction with the unreliable service. There are two grocery stores in the downtown area, and one warehouse store (comparable to Costco) located four miles from town. There are three restaurants in the area; I was warned against frequenting any of these by many community residents who characterized them as unpredictable, too expensive, and mediocre, at best. There are two bars, one liquor store, and seven churches.

Known as the salmon capital of the world (and some would argue the last surviving fish culture in the world), Bristol Bay is renowned for the millions of salmon that return to the watershed each year. The Bay's pure waters and healthy habitats situate the area as a fishing community. Commercial fishing and associated canneries have been major industries in the area

for decades, accounting for nearly 75 percent of local jobs. In September 2015, President Barack Obama, as part of his three-day Alaska tour, flew to Dillingham to see firsthand the salmon fishery and a local economy and subsistence lifestyle dependent on sustainable and healthy salmon runs. After meeting and spending time with local fisherman, Obama commented that “[Bristol Bay] represents not just a critical way of life that has to be preserved, but it also presents one of the most important natural resources that the United States has.” In addition to fish, a full array of wildlife, including grizzly bears, wolves, moose, caribou, porcupines, otters, and seals, inhabit this region. Subsistence activities, such as hunting, fishing, clam digging, berry picking, and gathering plants, remain an important aspect of daily life in Bristol Bay.

SAFE began serving domestic violence and sexual assault victims in the community in 1980. At that time, there was no physical shelter space and advocates took families into their homes for shelter and safety. There were only two paid staff—a director and a secretary/receptionist/advocate. By 1989, SAFE opened its shelter. The shelter was in the daylight basement of the ranch style house purchased from a local family. There were three bedrooms, one bathroom, a combined dining/kitchen area, a steam bath converted to storage, and space for 12 residents. The ground floor retained the original house kitchen, garage, dining and living rooms, and the bedrooms were turned into offices. Staff occupied offices and overflowed into the dining and living rooms and garage as staff numbers increased. In 1997-1998, the shelter received an addition that accommodated a new living room, fourth bedroom, second bathroom, child play area, and pantry. On the ground floor, a transitional one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment unit was added to assist clients who did not require protection from perpetrators anymore, but were waiting for housing. Two offices were added and the garage started its conversion to group meeting room with kitchen and utilities. Within one year of the transitional

apartment being finished, funding for Anana's House, the child receiving home for the State's Office of Children Services, was secured. In 1999, the apartment received an addition (a second bedroom, living room, entryway, separate entrance) and its' function as Anana's House began. Simultaneously, the shelter received an addition of an advocate office, crafts room, utilities room, and separate entrance. The shelter could now house 16 residents in bedrooms, with more space available in common areas for temporary beds. Through the years, SAFE had used container vans to store donations, and to operate a make-shift second hand store service.

In 2003-2004, SAFE expanded its non-residential space to include a second floor over the meeting room for five offices and a waiting area. A free-standing facilities manager shop and second hand store (Ulla's) were added in one free-standing building, and by 2006, that building's roof was lifted and a second floor installed. The second floor offices were connected to that addition, the SISTR Room (Safety In Sobriety Through Recovery, one program offered by SAFE). The SISTR Room has a kitchen and bathroom, exterior door, and is a meeting room for SAFE clients, SAFE staff, multi-disciplinary teams, and is available for rent. Anana's House closed in 2010, and was converted to the MYSPACE⁷ Youth Wellness Center in 2011. MYSPACE is an after-school program for adolescents 12 through 18 to participate in tutoring, individual projects, and community collaborations. In 2015, funding for childcare and children services ended, so the RAZZ Room is being used to collect and sort donations before being sold in Ulla's.

Today, SAFE's shelter consists of 16 beds open to women and children who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault or whose homes/living situations are unsafe due to related abuses (including alcoholism or substance abuse). SAFE also maintains a safe home

⁷ This stands for "Mental, Youth, Spiritual, Physical, Academic, Cultural, Emotional." One immediate observation of Alaska's domestic violence/sexual assault services agencies is their flair for creative acronyms.

network and alternative housing for adult male victims of violence. Emergency transportation for victims and their families is provided by SAFE, including bringing village residents in crisis via airplane to the shelter. Assistance with protective orders and other law enforcement and/or court action is provided to all SAFE clientele, as well as access to civil/legal representation. Safety planning, checks, monitoring, and long-term follow up are also components of SAFE's day-to-day operation. As a small, non-profit organization facing a funding crisis in light of state cutbacks, SAFE continuously fights to stay afloat. Today, positions are frequently cut and the scope of SAFE's services has narrowed substantially.⁸

Figure 3.2: *Front View of SAFE*



As an organization located in a rural dot of western Alaska, one might situate the grassroots beginnings of SAFE, the services it provides, and its contemporary fiscal challenges as a microcosm of any non-profit social services agency in the United States—the kind one would find in Anytown, USA. While there are factors that distinguish SAFE (and other victim services agencies in rural Alaska) from the rest of the country, the geographic reach of this small

⁸ The MYSPACE Youth Wellness Center is one service currently on the chopping block. During my fieldwork, I frequently assisted the Executive Director in seeking out sources of funding to sustain the program for an additional year. At the time of this writing, funds still have not been secured.

non-profit of humble beginnings is enough to position SAFE as a world unto itself. SAFE's service area includes Dillingham and the 33 villages and tribes in the Bristol Bay area, only one of which (Drifter Sound) is connected to Dillingham by a 25-mile road. There are no shelters in any of the villages, with the exception of a 4-bed shelter staffed by a part-time village advocate in Silver Cove. To reiterate: in an area roughly the size of Ohio and not interconnected via road system or state highway, SAFE is the only shop in town for domestic violence and sexual assault victims in Bristol Bay. In any given year, nearly 20% of adult females of the Bay are SAFE clients. While approximately 60 percent of Alaska's sexual violence victims are Alaska Native, SAFE staff estimate that 90 to 95 percent of their clientele are Native women.

GAINING ENTRY

The marked lack of in-depth fieldwork exploring the context and consequences of rural women abuse (particularly Native rural women abuse) is largely reflective of the wider marginalization of rural and Native social problems in academic discourse (Websdale, 1995). The logistical considerations of studying Indian Country (including access and travel), as well as the general misunderstanding of Alaska Native and American Indian communities, has resulted in a literature base that presents slanted, inaccurate, and somewhat jaded views of the issues facing these communities.⁹ Establishing trust and rapport, as well as crossing ethnic, gender and cultural lines in both my interactions with Native women and my overall presence in a

⁹ Marenin (1992) argued that the explanations of crime in Alaska Native villages are deduced largely from general approaches that are insufficiently specific to account for the divergent patterns of criminality among and within Native communities. Today, the literature continues to shoe-horn Western criminological perspectives (e.g. Social Disorganization Theory) in explaining crime in Native communities. Wells and Falcone (2008), for instance, claim *pervasive social disorganization* as characterizing many Native communities, reservations, and families where high rates of poverty, unemployment, alcohol and substance abuse, family dissolution, and educational deficiencies are much higher than the U.S. population. Though these features are characteristic of some Native communities (and certainly of communities in Bristol Bay), their relationship to crime and violence is not as seamless and direct as theory would predict. This will be discussed more in Chapter 4.

predominantly Native community were symbiotic challenges. These entry challenges were socio-cultural and political in nature.

Almost always, the discussion of the ethics of self-report research on abuse and interpersonal violence focuses on the risk of asking participants about their experiences. It has been argued that disclosing and reliving tragic events for the sake of research is unethical, stigmatizing, unsafe, and has no direct benefit to the participants themselves. The fear of “ripping a scab off and letting it bleed” was a chief concern of many with whom I discussed my research prospects. I encountered this “institutional silencing” of sexual violence victims (a point to which I return later) throughout my fieldwork. The reluctance surrounding engaging with victims of sexual assault almost always arose during informal meetings, conversations, and even email exchanges with mental health practitioners (psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, etc.). The primary concern was re-traumatization¹⁰ of the interviewees in discussing their victimization.¹¹ I was fortunate enough to have a few experiences with representatives of this professional community who asked me to not move ahead with this study, citing the high levels of interpersonal and historical traumas as too great to warrant in-depth conversations of these traumas. Needless to say, I did not cease and desist. However, I decided to test these ideas with a post-interview survey that assessed the degree to which participants themselves found the interview experience unethical, traumatizing, stigmatizing, and non-beneficial to themselves and the community. The survey was mailed to interview participants anywhere from two to four

¹⁰ By and large, the literature has noted that the vast majority of people participating in interpersonal violence studies experience neither immediate, nor long-term negative reactions (Probst, Edwards, Tansill & Gidycz, 2015).

¹¹ To be clear, this was not a concern of the SAFE staff, nor any professionals primarily engaged in victim services work. Those that had direct, ongoing, and sustained relationships with victims of sexual violence often explained the mythology surrounding “expected reactions” of victims in discussing their experiences. One SAFE advocate stated “if one is not a victim advocate and not in constant communication with victims, one is likely to imagine that it is a horrible experience for a victim to talk to anyone about it. But that is not reality.”

months after their interview. One hundred percent of respondents rated their interview experience as positive, empowering, and beneficial to themselves and to the community (full results of this survey are presented in Appendix I). A few sample excerpts of responses from the participants demonstrate the perceived benefit of participation:

Each time I am able to share to another human being who is sincere and shows care, it helps with my healing and recovery journey.

The more I talk about my trauma, the stronger I feel.

The interview did bring back traumatic memories, but not in a bad way.

This was a very good healing process for me to close that chapter in my book of life.

He took me back to my traumatic childhood, but he didn't leave me there.

Voicing my story and experiences was empowering and I was able to participate in something that will help other people and victims in one way or another.

My status as the proverbial “privileged white male” was also a concern during the early stages of this study. Indeed, the notion of white male interviewing a female sexual assault victim is jarring enough, but add to this the generations of trauma inflicted upon indigenous peoples primarily by white Western culture. The skepticism of a White male listening to and understanding the voice of a Native woman was experienced at all stages of the project. I lost track of how many times I heard “I’m surprised they (referring to SAFE) let a White guy do this kind of study.” In some respects, I accept this logic. But in another sense, and to another degree, I believe it to be quite false. Liebow (1993, p. xv) states¹²:

...the logical extension of such a view is that no one can know another, that only John Jones can know John Jones, in which case social life would be impossible. Trying to put oneself in place of the other lies at the heart of the social contract and social life itself.

¹² Elliot Liebow’s ethnography of homeless women in Washington, DC involved a similar interpersonal incongruence of an upper-class white male interviewing and observing homeless women residing in shelters, many of whom were Black/African American.

For all the reasons I have already discussed, I firmly believe that all the differences between me and the subjects of inquiry (i.e. the women), both the clearly visible and the more latent and subtle, bring a value to the study of violence against women that is rarely realized in the empirical literature on the topic. Is it a necessity that interviewers be of the same ethnicity as respondents? The empirical literature has still not reached a definitive verdict on this matter with some critics maintaining that interviewer-interviewee congruity is necessary for obtaining honest disclosures from respondents if the questions are about issues relevant to gender and race (Davis, 1997), while others prioritize the art of sensitivity and the ability to develop rapport with respondents (Reese & Brown, 1995). Needless to say, I align myself with the latter view, with the caveat that these tasks are indeed crafts that require time, patience, and reflexivity. Throughout this dissertation, I will signpost instances of positionality that hindered, as well as supported, the research process.

Finally, because of the unfortunate history of deplorable research practices¹³ used to study indigenous peoples and cultures, researchers must be sensitive to the local culture, traditions, research priorities, and lifestyle of Native communities. As such, obtaining local buy-in and approval, especially from Native tribal leadership, was a germane component of gaining entry. In essence, obtaining community approval is a mechanism for protecting tribal sovereignty. Proceeding with the study with only the institutional approvals of UCI (i.e. Western society) would have been symbolic of the historical and continuing colonizing practices from which Native people and communities are still healing. Therefore, in order to establish a

¹³ Hodge (2012) provides a comprehensive overview of research abuses with American Indian/Alaska Native populations in which harm outweighed benefits, producing great damage to participants, their families, and communities/tribes. Consequently, there is a need for Native communities' tribes to monitor research efforts and assure the mutually beneficial nature of their collaborations with researchers, federal and otherwise (as even respected academic institutions have caused abuse).

meaningful and honest partnership with the community, this research went through several channels of screening. First, I shared my proposal and a draft of the interview schedule with SAFE management, including the Executive Director, who is a lifelong Native resident of the Bristol Bay area. Over a period of eight months, numerous email exchanges and phone calls were convened to fine-tune the interview questions and the study protocols.

A number of procedures were put in place to ensure participant protection and confidentiality, as well as ensure that participants felt engaged in the research process and received feedback when requested. Chief among these included SAFE providing a space to convene each of the interviews. A large living room, primarily utilized for client intake, was carefully arranged to provide interviewees with a comfortable space. The spacing of furniture was carefully thought through, right down the amount of space that separated interviewees from me. While most interviewees chose for me to sit directly across from them (a coffee table separating us), a few elected for me to sit beside them. During the interviews, participants were given the option to have a victim advocate present to provide emotional support, as well as follow-up services, if needed. Four interviewees chose to have an advocate sit with them during the interview; none required any follow-up services. In addition to receiving a \$25 prepaid MasterCard, participants were also issued my business card, in addition to SAFE's direct services coordinator's card. Participants were also given the option of receiving a copy of the interview transcript via mail or email. Seven participants requested a transcript. In addition to coordinating these efforts with SAFE, communication or coordination with tribal leaders and Native organizations was also important. SAFE is not a Native organization, so obtaining buy-in from local leadership and organizations that can speak on behalf of the Native community also had to take place. In addition to SAFE management reviewing the proposal and interview

schedule, this documentation was also shared with SAFE's board of directors, several of whom work for the Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA¹⁴), which serves as a the united voice of Bristol Bay to provide social, economic, cultural, and educational opportunities to benefit the tribes and Native people of Bristol Bay. Finally, the project goals and objectives were shared with the First Chief of the Curyung Tribal Council.¹⁵ All entities were supportive of this project, contingent upon following participant protection and confidentiality safeguards, as well as my returning to the community to share the results of this research prior to publication.

SAFE played an instrumental role in the recruitment of interview participants. In addition to placing study flyers throughout the shelter for in-house residents, staff also posted flyers throughout the community, including the post office and the community center. A digital copy of the flyer was also posted on SAFE's website and Facebook page, as well as the Dillingham Community Facebook page. In addition, SAFE recruited former SAFE clientele not currently in shelter, but still living in the community. SAFE arranged for transportation to and from the interview for these participants.

GATEKEEPERS AND ANCHORS

During my time in Dillingham (and Alaska, more generally) I met some women who became pivotal respondents. Most ethnographic studies argue for the need for a gatekeeper (or guide) to provide access, reveal insights, illuminate analyses, challenge researcher assumptions, and even alter the direction of the research (O'Reilly, 2009). Lisa was a true gatekeeper in every

¹⁴ The passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 led to the creation of 12 regional Native corporations that are owned by the Alaska Native people through privately-owned shares of corporation stock. Alaska Natives alive at the time of ANCSA passage received 100 shares of stock in their respective corporation.

¹⁵ The Curyung Tribal Council operates as the Tribal Government in Dillingham. Curyung offers a wide variety of services to Tribal Members, including social services, housing, environmental improvement projects, and judicial services. The types of cases that Alaska tribal courts address include child custody, adoptions, child protection, probate, environmental regulation, and fish and game protection.

sense of the word. I reached out to Lisa via email in February 2014 on the recommendation of a violence against women expert from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Lisa, as I would come to find out, is a formidable figure in victim advocacy and social justice across the state of Alaska. Lisa's official job title is systems administrator/records analyst. In this capacity, she handles all of SAFE's technology-related matters and also is the keeper of all SAFE client intake records. In addition to this, she is a certified victim advocate with over 20 years' experience working with hundreds of sexual assault and domestic violence victims. She also is the creator and coordinator of the Bristol Bay Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Lisa was a pivotal gatekeeper in three ways. First, as a veteran member of SAFE and resident of Bristol Bay for 28 years, Lisa had keen insights on the social life of Bristol Bay, both contemporary and past forms. Many consider her the most intelligent source of knowledge on sexual assault and domestic violence in Bristol Bay, though she'll be the first to say that she's "no expert" on the subject. She was able to provide me the rich, "thick descriptions" over a wide range of a topics to help ground my understanding of life in rural Alaska. Second, Lisa holds a lot of pull with many people in the community. Many that work in the field of sexual assault in Bristol Bay, including sexual assault nurse examiners, police officers, the district attorney, and other SAFE staff, look to Lisa for leadership in decision-making, prevention strategies, and community outreach efforts. Additionally, she is very well-respected by the victims of sexual assault that she has served during her time at SAFE. For many interview participants, Lisa was key in introducing me and vouching for me. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Participants themselves were acutely aware of the controversial and political nature of research in their communities, given that little research has been of any benefit to indigenous peoples and cultures. Lisa served as a buffer between participants and myself by underscoring the importance of the research, how the

results would be used, and the benefit to participants and the broader community¹⁶. Without her, recruitment efforts would have been abysmal. One participant made the following remark at the beginning of her interview:

The reason I said yes [to participating in the interview] is because I trust Lisa's integrity, without any question. And that's why I said yes to this request. Otherwise I would have said no. And the reason is because every social worker and his brother is up here studying us like we're their laboratory rats. Their resumes get fatter, so do their bank accounts, and our problem worsens. So usually when people call and say "I'm working on my degree, can we talk?" I say no. I've done it before, but I always say no now. But because Lisa called, I trust her.

Finally, my relationship with Lisa transcended the professional setting and carried over into her personal life, her home, and her own personal relationships. In an extremely generous gesture, Lisa arranged a room in her home for me to stay as the fieldwork progressed, relieving some of the financial strain of renting out rooms at various Bed and Breakfasts during site visits. These stays allowed me to conduct longer site visits, become more entrenched in the community, and of course, learn more about contemporary and historical Bristol Bay from the eyes of two long-term residents (Lisa and her boyfriend).

Lisa's ability to vouch for me and connect me with the women also had a snowball effect, as I was able to establish anchors¹⁷ with various women that I continued contact with over the course of the study. As my fieldwork progressed, I often reconnected with these women to clarify new questions that arose and to seek clarification on new insights gleaned.

THE WOMEN

¹⁶ By and large, interviewees were less concerned about the direct benefit to themselves and more concerned with how the research would help their community.

¹⁷ I borrow this term from Owen's (1998) quasi-ethnography of struggle and survival in female prisons. In Owen's study, anchors consisted of female prisoners in various housing units with whom contact was maintained throughout the course of the entire study. In vouching for Owen, anchors provided a means for snowball sampling. In this study, I use the term "anchor" to refer to any woman with whom I was able to establish longer-term relationship. Anchors played a pivotal role in assisting with recruitment of additional research participants by "co-signing" for me.

About 35 adult women from Bristol Bay expressed interest in participating in the study and 18 participated. Participant attrition was usually a product of transportation issues. Women in the villages, for instance, stated they would participate if they happened to be in Dillingham at the time of one of the site visits. This was an unfortunate drawback of conducting intermittent visits, as opposed to remaining in the community permanently through the duration of the study. Four women scheduled an interview time, but did not show up. One woman's mental disability precluded her from providing informed consent to participate. Interviews were convened at SAFE from January through July 2015. The interviews were scheduled through SAFE, and local transportation was provided to and from the interview, when needed. The interviews lasted anywhere from one hour and 45 minutes to six hours.

From a distance, the women appeared to be a homogenous group. All were Alaska Native, representing various regional cultures (primarily Yup'ik), and had lived in the Bristol Bay community their entire life. The subsistence lifestyle (living off the land—hunting, fishing, berry-picking, etc.) was still practiced by most. All were devout members of the church, attending either Russian Orthodox or Moravian services. Nearly all suffered from alcoholism and substance abuse issues—many were in recovery, though a few were still actively using. Their sexual abuse experiences were almost always at the hands of family members and intimate partners (cousins, mostly; but also uncles, nephews, brothers, husbands, and boyfriends). Histories of sexual violence were almost always coupled with domestic violence. For the most part, victimization was episodic. The majority of women also had prior offense histories, including assault and battery arrests and DUI and other alcohol-related charges.

Brief sketches of the women are presented here to introduce them to the reader. Here and throughout the dissertation, the time at which their life histories were taken are all considered to

be the historical present. These introductory sketches are brief and superficial, and are intended as such. Nearly every woman, in one form or another, articulated the notion of feeling judged, misunderstood, and misrepresented within their families, communities, and culture. These sketches are meant to reflect society's *initial* impressions and reactions to these women. To that end, the following descriptions are meant only to provide introductions to, not understandings of, the women.

Terry is a currently single Alaska Native of 48 years and an on-and-off resident of Dillingham. Terry has been the victim of several forms of sexual abuse and sexual assault throughout her life, starting in childhood when one of her brother's friends fondled her. She experienced numerous forms of acquaintance abuse during her high school and young adult years. During adulthood, she talked about a time her father was very intoxicated and "made a move" on her. Her most recent sexual assault experience was the most grisly and involved her nephew breaking into her home, axing her bathroom door down trying to capture her, tying her up, and brutally assaulting her. Terry also has been a victim of domestic violence at the hands of several boyfriends. An admitted alcoholic, Terry struggles with sobriety today, and discussed having "the occasional slip-up." She views herself as somewhat of an outcast in the community, attributing this partly to the successful prosecution and conviction of her nephew (many of her family members have ended communication with her). Her reclusive nature is also the primary tool Terry uses to maintain her sobriety (despite the "slip-ups"), observing that most people in the community, including her close friends, are alcoholics, too.

Debbie is a married Yup'ik woman of 56 years from the village of Drifter Sound. Debbie was adopted¹⁸ by her grandparents shortly after birth and was primarily raised by her

¹⁸ I use the term "adoption" loosely, as these arrangements are almost never legally formalized. Several women discussed being raised by multiple parental figures, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and Godparents.

grandparents and her four uncles (whom she considered to be more like brothers). Debbie has experienced sexual assault and domestic violence all her life, with her earliest memories beginning at the age of six. Though she experienced violence at the hands of several perpetrators, Debbie talked in most detail about Seymour, an adult neighbor who sexually assaulted her and her friends numerous times during childhood. Debbie was also the victim of several instances of domestic violence with every boyfriend and husband she's had, with the exception of her current husband of 15 years. Debbie is a recovering alcoholic with 15 years of sobriety. Debbie became an anchor during the course of my fieldwork.

Alice is a 33-year old Yup'ik woman, originally from Angler Gulch and currently residing in Dillingham. Alice experienced sexual abuse at the hands of her uncle, as well as repeated incidents of domestic violence perpetrated by her ex-husband. When I met Alice, she was staying at the shelter—not because she has recently experienced violence, but because she needed a safe place to abstain from abusing alcohol. At the time of our talk, she had been sober for 24 hours having recently come off a week-long drinking binge. She mentioned feeling delirium tremors, shakes, dehydration, and pains in her kidneys, though I would never have known given the way she carried herself through the interview.¹⁹ Alice is also involved with the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and working to earn back visitation rights with her children.

Though it is tempting to frame this dynamic under the rubric of community social disorganization (particularly, family dissolution), I passionately refute this notion. The concept of the “nuclear family” and notions of how society is logically oriented are founded largely on Western cultural ideals. Most Alaska Native communities and villages are based on the extended family concept and are likely to include extensive household rosters, as well as frequent mobility of individuals between housing units. Schwede (2003) summarized his ethnographic observations of the Inupiaq people, noting that they tend to “not identify households in terms of shared physical structure [as the Census Bureau does], but rather on the basis of sharing of domestic functions such as earning and pooling income, cooperating in subsistence activities, cooking, child care, child raising, and other domestic tasks” (p. xiv). This indeed rings true for the Alaska Native people of Bristol Bay. I will return to this idea in Chapter 4.

¹⁹ By and large, this was common across all the women. Despite years (and generations) of trauma and physical hardship, this did not manifest itself on their outward appearance. They looked neither disheveled, nor overwrought. Lisa stated this is quite common among the Alaska Native women she has worked with over the past 20 years, simply observing that “what's happening on the inside rarely shows itself on the outside.”

Marcy is a 50-year old Yup'ik woman who has spent her life moving around the Bristol Bay area. Violence and abuse, as well as alcoholism and gambling, have run many generations in Marcy's family. Marcy was raped by a first cousin at the age of 16 while passed out after a night of heavy drinking. Her brother also sexually abused her on a handful of occasions. Marcy has long struggled with alcohol addiction. At the time of her interview, she was living at the shelter. She has a reputation of sneaking alcohol on the premises. Marcy's speech and cadence pronounce her Alaska Native background. She presented her story in the structure of an epic verse, speaking two to three sentences at a time, followed by a five second pause. Though the way she presented her life and experiences were seemingly anachronistic to the ear of an outsider, several reviews of the dialogue proved her story to be complete. My experience with Marcy underscores the importance of patience and careful listening when conducting research with Alaska Native populations. As our interview progressed, I became aware that Marcy needed to tell her story her own way. In attentively listening and asking a very limited number of questions, I was rewarded with a rich interview of over three hours.²⁰

Violet is a 20-year old Inupiaq woman who spent her life living back and forth between her parents' home in Anchorage and her grandmother's home in Dillingham. Violet was gang-raped at a party by three close friends during her junior year of high school in Dillingham. Until the interview, Violet had never talked with anyone about this incident. Though her victimization involved alcohol, Violet abstains from drinking and did not discuss any issues of alcohol or drug dependence. She is married with two stepchildren and currently experiences threats and harassment from their drug-addicted mother, and has encountered numerous challenges with the

²⁰ For the record, I ended up receiving answers to all the questions on the interview schedule.

court in obtaining protective orders. Violet became another anchor during the course of my fieldwork.

Diane is a 32-year old woman who identifies as part Yup'ik, part Aleut, and part white. Growing up, she was raised primarily by her father, grandfather, and aunts. Her mother left the home when Diane was four months old, but periodically came in and out of her life; in Diane's words: "she was a mother when it was convenient for her." Diane was raped by her boyfriend a few years ago, and also had a series of emotionally abusive relationships. On many occasions, she was guilted into having sex. Though in a happy and healthy marriage currently, Diane still remains very guarded, keeps to herself, and does not leave her home very often for fear of a chance encounter with her rapist in the community.

Tina is a 29 year-old Aleut woman originally from the village of Halibut Point and currently living at SAFE while waiting for a bed to open up at the local substance abuse treatment center. Tina was by far the most frank and to-the-point about every aspect her of life. Tina had a long history of alcohol addiction and drug abuse, including crack cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine addiction. Tina was sexually abused at early age (she believes the abuse started during infancy) by a much older cousin that was molesting her and all her sisters. A different cousin raped her two years ago. She also was sexually assaulted while working as a prostitute in Anchorage. Tina was recently diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver, prompting her decision to get sober.

Brenda is a 57-year old Aleut woman and a lifelong resident of Dillingham. Brenda characterized her childhood as non-violent, although she did discuss her alcoholic father's aggressive behavior as frightening, prompting her mother to temporarily remove the children from the home on one occasion or two. At 18, Brenda was raped a knifepoint by stranger while

attending college in Anchorage. Brenda also experienced domestic violence during her two previous marriages. Though she characterized the violence as exclusively physical, she did recall being forced to perform sexual acts that she knew were not right on her first husband. Brenda began drinking in high school and became a “full-fledged alcoholic” by 18. Brenda just celebrated her 25th sobriety anniversary. Brenda became another anchor throughout my fieldwork.

Charlene is a 21-year old Yup’ik woman originally from Angler Gulch. Since she could remember, her family frequently moved back and forth between Angler Gulch and Dillingham. After years of child neglect, physical abuse, and substance abuse in her home Charlene and her siblings moved in with her grandparents. Her sexual abuse began in the fifth grade, experiencing fondling and rape by various cousins, her father, her uncle, and her grandfather. Her latest experience with sexual violence happened in Dillingham during the previous summer, involving a man (with whom Charlene had been in alcohol abuse treatment) raping both Charlene and her friend at gunpoint. Charlene recently completed in-patient treatment for alcoholism at the local substance abuse treatment center and is currently in outpatient treatment. Charlene was living at SAFE at the time of her interview, as she had no other safe place to be where alcohol was absent.

Sandra is a 57-year old Yup’ik woman from Ironside. Like Debbie, Sandra also experienced sexual abuse at the hands of Seymour. In her current job at the local public services agency, Seymour is Sandra’s supervisor. For the past six months, Sandra has experienced ongoing sexual harassment by Seymour, including inappropriate touching. She was currently staying at SAFE in order to receive assistance on filing a grievance against Seymour. In Ironside, Sandra is unable to seek legal assistance for preparing this grievance, as the public notary is Seymour’s second cousin. Similar to Marcy, one must be a good listener when speaking with

Sandra. Again, to a Western ear, the order in which she recounts events appears anachronistic and rife with non-sequiturs; yet all the pieces do form a complete and coherent story.

Nancy is a 58-year old Tlingit woman, originally from Southeast Alaska²¹. Nancy grew up in Southeast Alaska, moving to Angler Gulch at the age of 16 to be with her newlywed husband. Nancy experienced years of traumatic rape and domestic violence by her husband shortly after getting married. She was raped numerous times, as well as forced to have sex with her husband's friends in exchange for drugs. Nancy developed a drinking problem during these years and continued until her husband's death. After her husband's death, Nancy began working with other women in Angler Gulch to promote community wellness and safety. She was met with much resistance and gained a reputation as a "big mouth" that needed to "learn her place." Today, Nancy continues to work to support Native women's rights and wellness. Nancy became another anchor during the course of my fieldwork.

Carrie is a 33-year old Yup'ik woman from Eastwind Bay. Carrie discussed having had sexual intercourse at the age of 8 with her younger adopted brother, though she did not explicitly call this incident rape. After being groped by a grocery store manager at the age of 8, Carrie estimates that she was raped 8 to 9 times by different men in the community. At one point, Carrie stated that she became very promiscuous and was always "looking for it." Born to a mother that abused alcohol and drugs while pregnant, Carrie has FASD.

Claire is a 32-year old Yup'ik woman, born and raised in Dillingham. She experienced rape on several occasions following the birth of her daughter at age 25. Her primary perpetrator was her first cousin, although she also discussed a string of rapes that happened during the summer by fishermen with whom she was drinking. Claire also described her sexual relationship

²¹ To protect Nancy's identity, I have chosen not to reveal the name of her home village.

with her physician who introduced her to prescription drugs. Though she does not describe her sexual relationship with him as abusive (in fact, she stated she was in love with him), I was left with the impression that his actions were, at a minimum, an abuse of authority. Claire has FASD²² and identifies as an alcoholic and a prescription drug addict.

Eva is a 22-year old Yup'ik woman (seven eighths, to be exact) from the village of Drifter Sound. During childhood and adolescence, her family moved back and forth between Drifter Sound and Eastwind Bay, settling in Drifter Sound permanently when Eva reached the 7th grade. Eva experienced rape by her first cousin at the age of 12 while living in Eastwind Bay. Around the same time, Eva was molested by her stepfather. Her latest victimization occurred about one year ago at the hands of a second cousin who raped her after a night of heavy drinking. Unlike many women, Eva proceeded with pressing charges against her second cousin upon finding out that he had committed the same crimes against two other family members. Though Eva went through periods of heavy drinking leading up to and immediately following the rape, she abstains from alcohol entirely today.

Maddy is a 52-year old Aleut woman, born and raised in Dillingham. Maddy's experiences were limited to childhood, and consisted of forced oral sex, inappropriate touching, and attempted penetration. Her primary perpetrators were various cousins (including a female cousin), as well as an uncle. Maddy did not experience any sexual or domestic violence during adulthood, a fact which she attributes to her strong support system. She has no history of drug or alcohol abuse.

²² Whether discussing community challenges, family problems, or social ills, the acronyms FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), as well as FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), regularly worked their way into the discussion. The fact that these acronyms appeared as staples in the social lexicon of women was very telling about the pervasive presence of alcohol and addiction in the community.

Tamara is a 41-year old half-Yup'ik and half-white woman, born in Fairbanks but raised primarily in Dillingham by her grandmother. Tamara has been a victim of sexual violence and domestic violence her entire life. She witnessed graphic domestic violence and alcoholism in her home both between her mother and father, as well as her mother and step-father. While living with her grandmother, Tamara was molested by a cousin at age 10. Tamara had numerous violent relationships in adulthood and suffered severe physical injuries, including broken ribs and a broken sternum. Tamara developed an addiction to alcohol in her early 20s and became a “full blown alcoholic” by her 30s. At the time of my first meeting with Tamara, she had reached six months of sobriety.

Ginny is a 44-year old Yup'ik woman from Eastwind Bay. She spent her life growing up back and forth between Eastwind Bay and Bethel. Ginny had a non-abusive childhood and despite having an alcoholic father, she stated that she never knew this father until she was much older. Ginny experienced domestic violence during her first marriage. She soon divorced and remarried. Her sexual victimization occurred shortly after her son was deployed to Afghanistan. During this time, she began drinking heavily. One afternoon, Ginny had fallen asleep and her neighbor—a man she had attended high school with—broke into her home and raped her.

Desa is a 67-year old Yup'ik/Gwitch'in woman originally from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area. She grew up in the village of Marshall and moved to Anchorage shortly after the age of 10. Desa experienced years of child sexual abuse (including being sexually molested by a predator priest), domestic violence, rape, and alcohol addiction. She attempted suicide a number of times before getting sober at age 35. Since then, Desa has worked as a victim and children's advocate in various rural parts of the state. She also works as an activist and is very critical of Alaska's current efforts to temper sexual and domestic violence, as well as the pervasive nature

of tribes “turning a blind eye” to seemingly well-respected leaders who prey upon women and children. Desa became another anchor during the course of my fieldwork.

None of the women ever explicitly said “Our community needs help” in those exact words, but each one of them told their full uncensored story, exposing their trauma, humiliation, ostracism, and sometimes triumph, in hopes that their words will reach and help other women. If for no other reason than this, their voices must be heard.

CHAPTER 4: IT'S WHO I AM, IT'S WHAT I WAS BORN INTO, IT'S MY STRENGTH

Initially, the aim of this project was to understand sexual violence in rural Alaska communities and villages and, ideally, to try to see how certain community level factors are related to the incidence and prevalence of sexual violence. A thorough scan on the literature on rural crime and indigenous violence, as well as my year's worth of call notes with Lisa and other key informants, guided much of my preliminary assumptions and hypotheses on the subject. Lack of well-paying jobs, chronic alcoholism, geographic isolation, family breakdown, lack of public resources, unforgiving climate—all the touchstone predictors of violent crime that I'd been studying for the past decade, neatly packaged before me.

It didn't take long to realize that to think of these women as one-dimensional figures (e.g. "victims" or "alcoholics" or even "structurally and socially disadvantaged persons") only served to further obscure our understanding of the issue. No doubt did most women fit in one or another such categorization. Some childhoods were punishing and painful, many struggled with alcohol or drug dependence, and all had experienced disrespect and displacement at one point or another. However, these issues alone were not defining of the women. Some were quick to call out some of the misunderstandings of them that hold firm footing in dominant societies and cultures. As I began to pore over and make sense of my interview notes and community observations, it became clear that my initial assumptions and hypotheses needed much reconsideration. Like most of us, the women in this study longed for the opportunity to be acknowledged, listened to, and better understood. Holding my social, gender, and cultural biases in check (indeed a task easier said than done) was necessary to meet this tall order.

Women in general seemed to have lost much of their dimensionality as a result of empirical research on the violence perpetrated against them. They are examined as hospital

patients, criminal trial witnesses, order-of-protection petitioners, civil litigants, mental health treatment participants, or jail/prison inmates. Rarely are they examined as they are, free of legal, medical, or social categorization. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a holistic and localized understanding of the women, their communities, and the round of life that constructs their experiences, identity, and purpose.

RURAL ECONOMY

None of the women grew up in homes that would be considered, by Western standards, affluent or wealthy. In fact, they come from communities with average per capita incomes of between \$10,000 and \$20,000. In some villages, as many as 40 percent of the population live below the poverty line, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Despite these grim statistics, women generally felt they were financially well-provided for during childhood, emphasizing having the majority of their basic needs tended to, always having adequate shelter, and never going hungry. Women identified a number of issues that shed light on rural economy and economic wellbeing²³ (or lack thereof) in their respective communities, namely the extreme cost of living, the almost exclusive economic dependence on the fisheries, and the subsistence lifestyle.

Cost of Living

Living costs in rural Alaska are quite extreme. This is primarily due to the isolated state of these communities. Transportation costs alone double the price of goods²⁴, given that virtually everything must be flown or brought in by barge. If a delivery fails (due, for instance, to low

²³ I consciously avoid using the term “poverty,” because with the exception of two women, this term was not used by women in discussions of socio-economic status. Historically, the Yup’ik people had no words to describe being rich or poor. Historical records indicate that notions of wealth and poverty were first introduced when the first white Russian traders arrived in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the 1830s (Bista, 1974)

²⁴ One only has to visit one of the three local grocery stores to get a sense of the extreme markup of anything that has water weight. A half-gallon of commercial brand orange juice, for example, runs anywhere from 15 to 18 dollars.

river levels or shipping equipment breakdown) or there is an accident that destroys the shipment, even more costly emergency transport is necessary. Due to high costs of transporting oil, families often did not have enough money to buy fuel oil. Even for a small village of 200 people, a loan to purchase a winter's supply of fuel can run as high as \$500,000. The more isolated the community, the higher the cost. Some women linked the difficulty in accessing oil to some of the social problems facing communities. For example, Alice explained that in her village, oil pillaging was common, with families' and businesses' fuel supply being stolen in the middle of the night.

Creature comforts such as running water and electricity were largely unheard of during many of the women's childhoods. Packing water was a daily necessity, as was delivering water to elderly residents in the community or village. In the absence of running water and a functional sewer system, transporting and emptying honey buckets²⁵ was also a daily reality of rural village life. Growing up with her grandmother, Tamara²⁶ described a typical day in the life in a rural village:

It was pre-programmed life. We'd get up, eat our breakfast, wash our face, say our prayers, and then we'd go up and wait for the bus. And then come home and start our chores, and then light the steam bath, take a steam, and then just start the same process over and over again. Everything was cultural, it seemed. It wasn't like today where there's restrictions. We didn't have technology or anything like that. We didn't have running water. We were always working—chopping wood, washing clothes with a washboard and hang-drying them. We'd pack our drinking water from an old well. It was work. It was constant work. That's how my grandma was raised. She came from a sod dome-type house, so that was all she knew.

²⁵ In the absence of waste disposal plumbing or running water, honey buckets are used as portable latrines for rural households.

²⁶ Tamara, who is only 10 years my senior, was gracious and patient enough to explain what “packing water,” “lighting the steam bath,” and various other daily chores actually entailed. Admittedly, understanding rural life was more challenging than I had anticipated. As a 30-something suburban Midwesterner, the only exposure that I had to what women described growing up was limited to what I saw on *Little House on the Prairie* reruns.

Debbie lightheartedly reflected on the relative meaning of wealth and economic wellbeing in a rural village, stating “I remember we were poor. It’s not like today—I’m really rich because now I have running water and a washer\dryer!”

Dependence on Fishing

No state shows the degree of dependence on a single resource as Alaska. In most of rural Alaska, particularly the North Slope, that resource is oil. In Bristol Bay, salmon is the primary catalyst of economic vitality. Heavy dependence on the fisheries was frequently discussed by the women, all of whom came from fishing backgrounds (i.e. their parents, grandparents, and other extended relatives were involved in commercial fishing, subsistence fishing, or both). Violet explained that commercial fishing for a couple of months in Bristol Bay provides enough income to financially sustain a family for an entire year. Consequently, holding regular and consistent employment and adhering to the 40-hour workweek was not necessary for Bristol Bay residents. “After fishing time, everybody in this community was rich,” Violet said. “\$5000 to \$200,000 in one person’s pocket.” Brenda described how her family made its living from fishing:

We’d get a big grubstake every spring. The fishing industry provided a whole year’s supply of living. You didn’t have to work if you didn’t want to. It sustained our family.

Subsistence Life

Despite the extreme cost of living and the high dependence on the fisheries, most women emphasized that these issues were not insurmountable sources of strain growing up in Bristol Bay. In fact, some women described themselves as “rich” and “blessed.” Subsistence practices largely fueled the feeling of richness among women. Subsistence life is perhaps the most common Native cultural practice and runs the gamut from hunting, fishing, snaring, and berry-picking. Women’s sense of place and identity is highly connected to subsistence activities. Discussions of hunting and fishing season preparations, harvesting practices, and food

preparation were usually laced with emphasis on Native cultural values, including togetherness, caring for elders, and respect for the land. Though subsistence as a cultural practice is important in its own right, it is also an important economic base for the very existence of Native communities and villages. The role that subsistence plays in rural Alaskan economy complicates the issue of economic wellbeing in Bristol Bay.

Given that various subsistence foods do not come in season all at once (in addition to the laws and regulations that have increasingly restricted subsistence activities in rural Alaska), women emphasized the importance of harvesting foods when they become available. For instance, “splitting” fish (i.e. putting fish away for the winter) was a routine practice among the women growing up, storing as many as 200 harvested fish after fishing season. Though the Native people of Bristol Bay are not entirely dependent upon subsistence harvests as they may have been generations ago, most women highlighted the richness that subsistence provides, not just culturally but economically, as well. Indeed, subsistence appeared to offset the financial strains that cost of living and dependence on the fisheries induce on community citizens. “Not everyone gets to go fishing, berry picking, or moose hunting so we’re very fortunate,” Violet explained. “No matter how poor we may be, we will always be rich in our heart because of the land that we live off of for free.” Claire echoed Violet’s analysis. When asked what being Alaska Native meant to her, she simply responded “Very rich. Maybe not financially, but everything else. Organic foods—berries, cranes, beavers, porcupines, ducks, goose, moose, caribou. No pesticides, no anti-biotics, nothing added to it. Just fresh. Pure off the lot. We also have the best drinking water.”

I introduce the discourse surrounding subsistence as an economic base of Native life in Bristol Bay here for two reasons. For one, women’s narratives demonstrate that subsistence

remains crucial to the economic vitality of families and communities. Low incomes and lack of participation in traditional (i.e. Western culture) 9-to-5, 40 hour-per-week jobs were not inherently tied to economic strain in families. In essence, the ability of the Native community to provide for itself and “hold its own” is largely met through subsistence. The second reason I introduce this concept here is because the eventual infiltration of Western economic practices into Native traditional systems (in the form of subsistence regulations and Limited Entry fishing) have had significant impacts on the subsistence practices. Women witness to these changes articulated the cascading effects of the Native community’s attempt to adapt to these changes, including diminished local participation in commercial and subsistence fishing operations, decrease in craft values associated with subsistence practices in favor of material and cash values, and a widening of the communication gap between elders and youth. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

FAMILY LIFE

The complexity of native family life cannot be overstated. The western schema of the “nuclear family” has little historical relevance to the Alaska Native family structure in Bristol Bay. In discussing their family lives, most women articulated being born into two relational systems—their family of orientation and an extended kinship network. Women described their families of orientation (i.e. the family they were born into, consisting of parents and siblings) in terms of blood relations and familial roots, whereas their extended kinship network was described much more broadly, inclusive of grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, neighbors, family friends, and neighbors. The extent to which these two systems overlapped was different for every woman. A couple of women did live in what Western society would consider a “traditional” familial environment (e.g. they were born into a home with two biological parents

and stayed exclusively with those two parents throughout childhood and adolescence). For example, Terry and her brothers lived with both parents throughout all her formative years. Terry's other extended family members (i.e. aunts, uncles, and cousins) were present during her childhood, but she characterized her family of orientation as solely responsible for raising her. For most women, this was not the case.

For most women, child rearing was largely characterized as a shared responsibility, and women spent varied amounts of time growing up with many different people. Some women related this to household dysfunction, including alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Alice spent much of her childhood staying with aunts and grandmothers, citing alcohol abuse and domestic violence as the primary reasons. In discussing community challenges, Alice said "Most of the challenge was growing up in my own home. I didn't want to be home. I wanted to be placed out of the home. I would always go to my uncles and aunts most of the time. She was the one that did most of my birthdays for me." Tamara was also exposed to parental alcohol abuse and domestic violence during childhood. At age 2, Tamara and her two sisters were sent to live with an elderly grandmother. Though Tamara still maintained a relationship with both parents, she characterized her grandmother as her primary caretaker, simply stating "I know who my parents are, but I wasn't exposed to them growing up."

More often, however, women situated extended kinship networks as Native cultural practice. In this sense, being raised in different households and by different people was not a means of escaping trauma or abuse, but a means through which to grow, learn, and connect with culture. Diane's birth mother left her and father when Diane was four months old. Despite this absence, Diane did not feel that she grew up without a motherly figure. Diane explained how different family members filled this void:

I was always with somebody. I always had family, even though I didn't have a mom. I had two aunties and a grandma. My grandma died when I was seven, but she took care of me before she died. And my aunties helped. So it was like I had three moms. And now that matters more than having the one person that should have been my mom, because they all taught me things about life. Important things. Things that matter.

Given the seasonality of employment in the fishing industry and the extended periods of time parents spent away from home, women often spent weeks or months at a time with extended family, neighbors, or family friends. Maddy, whose parents fished commercially every summer, often stayed with babysitters, stating “you just lived with whoever babysat you.”

Relationships between the women and their extended relatives had profound impacts, particularly with grandparents. In many cases, grandparents acted as culture-bearers, sharing experiences, ancestral knowledge, and how to live the *Yuuyaraq* (the Yup'ik way of life). Violet spent her entire childhood living between her parents' home in Anchorage during the school year and her grandmother's home in Dillingham during the summer. It was through Violet's grandparents that she “got the Native lifestyle,” consisting primarily of learning subsistence practices. “We really got a taste of our cultural background, whereas we didn't get that at home,” she said. “We were taught by our elders—our traditions and lifestyles.” On her experience growing up with her grandparents in Eastwind Bay, Ginny offered the following reflection:

They were actually the ones that taught me the way of life. The way of life in Alaska. When we were out camping, my grandfather took me out for a walk...and he told me “This is your land. This is our land. Respect it, learn it, and in return, you'll have the same thing. The land will respect you and...you'll be blessed.” And I didn't quite understand it at that time, but while growing up, I learned it more and more and knew exactly what he meant by that. Living off the land with respect.

Adoption and Foster Care

The subjects of adoption and foster care almost always arose (and were used interchangeably) during discussions of family life. Most of the women either discussed being

adopted themselves or growing up with adopted siblings in the home. As mentioned previously, many women were informally adopted by grandparents. After her biological mother gave birth to and left her at the village hospital, Debbie's grandmother brought her home to the village and cared for her, though she still maintained a relationship (albeit not a close one) with her birth mother. As stated earlier, adoption proceedings were almost always informal and not necessarily permanent. Brenda, Alice, and Carrie all discussed their adopted younger siblings, each noting that such arrangements were made family-to-family, and not formally processed through government-run or social service agencies. Brenda detailed multiple adoption arrangements within her family:

My brother was born in 1963 and we had this girl from upriver and she was babysitting us and she was a young girl. And when she came down from upriver, she was pregnant and uh, usually you know the family gets first choice of the children when the mothers can't have, you know, can't keep the baby. But for some reason she asked my parents if they wanted a boy and there was only two of us girls in the family. SO that's how we adopted my brother. Although, you know, like my mother was adopted, too. She was born in 1937 and her mama died when she was three or four months old. At that time, the male—they do the trapping and everything else, so he couldn't take care of this little baby girl. So what he did was give the baby to family, my grandma. They had kids and they were able to take her and raise her. And usually, when they give the baby up, most of the people like to see it with families, you know?

Also common among women was taking in other children from the community on a temporary basis. Like adoption, foster care was not conducted under the auspices of the government or social service agencies, but rather through kinship networks. It generally appeared that families provided foster care for altruistic reasons, namely to provide temporary support for other families that may be experiencing challenges. Sandra's mother frequently took in children from the village as a means of helping others in the community:

My mom used to take in people—like when there's too many kids in the family and they're struggling—my mom used to take those people. Give them clothes, eat, go to school, let them stay with us. One whole year. She used to do that—foster care provider. She never worked with the State—she did it on her own.

That's how we were raised—to help each other if a family needs help. We had to help those families.

Tina's mother also frequently took in temporary foster children, assuming a motherly role with them as she did her own children:

She was always so great to these foster kids. Willing to take them in, feed them, give them what their parents couldn't, love them. We'd even call them brother and sister.

Brenda equated the relative ease with which children were able to float from one household to another via kinship networks with the strength of Bristol Bay during her formative years:

It seems like our community was really supportive of kids. We were able to just go into peoples' houses and visit as a young child—"Oh hi! How are you?" And they wouldn't kick us out or anything. Really receptive to kids. There was always different kinds of kids at our house growing up...because we had to make sure [they] were not on the streets.

The structure of women's family lives is important to understand for several reasons. First, as illustrated in nearly all the women's stories, the concept of "family" itself is very complex and fluid, evoking multiple layers of influence, including bloodlines, tribes, culture, and community. Ginny put it best when she said "It takes an entire community to raise a child." During my earlier conversations with women, I found myself "getting lost" in some of the seemingly complex stories women told me about their families. Consider how Marcy discusses her family life below:

My biological mom—she's my oldest sister. My grandparents raised me. There was 9 of us girls on my grandparents' side, 5 boys. My biological mom, she's the oldest. She had 1, 2, 3, 4—I had four other siblings. There was five of us. So I grew up with a big family.

During my talk with Marcy, I had an extremely difficult time (and still do) trying to determine when she was talking about her mother versus her sister because she would use both

terms interchangeably²⁷. This was common with many of the women. With Carrie, it wasn't until the very end of our conversation that she said "I loved my parents like they were my own," indicating that she, too, had grown up in an adoptive home. This led me to wonder: Why didn't Carrie discuss her adoption when she began discussing her parents? As my fieldwork progressed, I realized that I was attempting to "compartmentalize" women's relationships in an attempt to make sense of those relationships. Ginger, who has worked with the Yup'ik people of Bristol Bay for almost 30 years, explained the difference between Yup'ik culture and Western culture:

Yup'ik people live in world that is connected all the time. I have been witness to that world, [but] that is not the world I come from. The world I come from is compartmentalized into families, cousins, who's related, where we come from... Yup'ik people really truly have this sense of *relationship* that defines who they are. They aren't people with relationships; they *are* relationships that happen to have a body connected to it. They are connected all the time. They live in a collective consciousness in a way that we don't.

It is tempting to conceive of the frequent migration of families, the episodic absence of parents, and seemingly crowded households as potentially criminogenic. After all, mainstream criminological theory has long celebrated the ideals of residential stability and intact harmonious family units as buffers against crime and delinquency. However, as women told their stories, it became clear that the manner in which Native families were organized was reflective of daily Native life hundreds of years ago, including pre-contact. Village life has been historically characterized by settlements ranging in size from a single family to several hundred men, women, and children living in a dozen overlapping extended family households, interrelated through marriage and adoption (Fienup-Riordan, 2005). Though Native communities today are

²⁷ Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins are often just as emotionally close to children as are their parents and siblings. In fact, at some time in their lives many Native American children live in the same household with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Roles and relationships among tribal members can also be interchangeable. For example, it is common to describe some family members as parents even if they are older sisters or aunts by marriage (Clarke, 1991).

considerably larger, extended family relations still serve as the linchpin of everyday life. Every woman lamented the changes in Native family life, specifically noting how the family structure has become progressively more narrow and exclusive of tribal, cultural, and community influence. This social change was largely implicated in the social ills plaguing women's respective communities (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).

NATIVE IDENTITY

In describing the women of Bristol Bay, I use the term *Native* (a word sometimes loaded with pejorative meaning) because this is how all the women described themselves. Though all the women identified as Alaska Native, the heterogeneity of this sample cannot be overstated. All the women identified as Alaska Native, with the majority identifying as Yup'ik or part-Yup'ik Eskimo.²⁸ Brenda, Maddy, and Tina identified as Aleut, Violet identified as Inupiaq, and Nancy identified as Tlingit. Only two women identified as 100 percent Native, with the rest claiming mixed heritage, including Russian, Scandinavian, Irish, Italian, Swedish, and Japanese backgrounds.²⁹ Regardless of how many racial ancestries one claimed, all the women claimed their Alaska Native identity first, placing much less emphasis on ethnic group (i.e. Eskimo vs. Aleut vs. Indian vs. non-Native) or regional culture differences (i.e. Yup'ik vs. Aleut vs. Tlingit

²⁸ Usually associated with popular notions of living in igloos, donning fur parkas, and migrating via dog sled, the culture of today's Alaska Eskimo does not completely fit this stereotype. The modern Eskimos are a hunting people, living in more than 100 widely separated villages among the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean coasts. Alaska Eskimos never built igloos, although some women discussed their families' having built snow windbreaks when caught outside in storms. Traditional Eskimo clothes, specifically mukluks and kuspugs, are still in fashion, although online vendors and mail-order catalogues dominate most of the clothing market in Bristol Bay. Modern day transportation is mostly accomplished by cars and trucks within villages and airplanes between villages (as the vast majority of villages are not inter-connected by road system).

²⁹ Historically, American Indians and Alaska Natives have had very high rates (exceeding 50% in some areas) of inter-racial marriage, mostly to whites and Blacks (Sandefur & Liebler, 1997). In fact, in 2010, Bristol Bay had the second highest proportion of households with both spouses reporting multiple races in the entire United States (Johnson & Kreider, 2010).

vs. Inupiaq). Brenda, an Aleut woman, also claims the Yup'ik Eskimo culture, noting "it's the general term around here."

Tamara, a half Yup'ik, half Caucasian woman, said "all my life, I only ever claimed the Native side." In situating her own identity, Terry briefly described the lineage of three generations of her family:

My mom is Athabascan [Indian] and we don't know the other heredities that she has because she didn't know her father and everything is hush-hush in certain towns. We do know some of her other relatives and they are mostly Indian. Dad is Caucasian and Aleut. I'm not sure what Grandma was. She may have been Eskimo. My Grandfather sailed over from Norway—he's actually Swedish-Danish-Irish Caucasian. So we're all inter-racial, totally. I just tell people I'm Alaska Native.

Similarly, Violet, while priding herself on her Inupiaq heritage, emphasized her universal acceptance of all indigenous people:

To me—Inupiaq, Yup'ik, Athabascan, Alutiiq, anything—we're all Alaska Native. I look at us all as one. And I enjoy being around people with similar background as me, yes. But also, similar values, sense of values of life, or traditional values.

Alice expressed a degree of ambivalence on the subject of racial and cultural identity, simply stating "I don't look at people by their nationalities; it's more about their personalities."

Tina, an Aleut woman, also hinted at the somewhat exchangeable/negotiable nature of race and culture. My dialogue with Tina demonstrates what some would consider a progressive viewpoint on Native/White race relations:

JEREMY: Do you identify as Alaska Native?

TINA: Yes. Aleut.

JEREMY: What does it mean to be Aleut to you?

TINA: Umm I guess I never really thought about what it means to me.

JEREMY: Is it important to you?

TINA: No. Wait. I mean—you mean specifically Aleut? Or to be Native? To be Native, it is.

JEREMY: So regardless if one is Yup'ik, Aleut, Inupiaq—you feel they are all your brothers and sisters.

TINA: Even me and you!

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my own positionality vis-à-vis women's difficulty to negotiate discursively the meanings behind race and culture. Of course, embedded within this seemingly simple question is a complex and nuanced history of racial politics that cut across centuries of personal interaction between Natives and whites. Though I suspected early on that my own background might pose some barrier to allowing the women to extrapolate on the meaning of their Native roots, it was rare that women commented on this dynamic. Diane, however, made no bones about calling a spade a spade. After a series of questions in which I probed on her identity as a Native woman, she began to express a degree of frustration with her struggle to respond. At one point, she admitted to feeling caught off guard and under the impression that she was “just there to talk about rape.” She explained the difficulty in communicating her identity to me, comparing our exchange to a previous relationship she had with another white man:

Man, some of these are hard! It's hard to explain myself to you. It's hard. I was with this one guy—well he was trying to get with me but I didn't want to be with him. He was a white guy and he didn't get it. He didn't get it and I couldn't be with him. He wasn't mean. I don't know what it was—something bugged me. I just couldn't explain everything. I just couldn't.

I believe there were other women that shared Diane's point of view to a degree, although the dynamics of race entered into the conversation more subtly. On occasion, women would remark that others in their family or community had a less-than-favorable opinion of whites, and this was framed as a “them, not me” dynamic. In describing her village, which is divided by river

into North and South Shore, Debbie situated her neighborhood (South Shore) as accepting of whites, but not the North Shore. Others seemed determined to demonstrate their acceptance of others. Ginny was quite insistent on the issue, stating “when we die, all of ashes will be the same color.” Ginny went on further to explain that racial acceptance is a perpetual dialogue driven by respect, humility, and personal growth. Ginny’s second husband, a white man from the lower 48, was embraced by Ginny’s family and the broader community because he embraced the traditions and informal codes of the community.

It would be folly to maintain that “race didn’t matter” in this study. There’s no doubt that issues of race and culture exerted a powerful influence on the interactions between the women and me that are too complex and subtle to fully appreciate in this manuscript. I did have one experience that bears mentioning, as I believe this to be a fairly pivotal moment in my fieldwork in terms of “experiencing race” in this community.

One afternoon, I was approached by Danielle, a Native woman in her early 20s and the shelter manager of SAFE. Danielle had offered to make me an authentic *qaspek* (pronounced kus-puk), a tunic-length hooded pullover commonly worn by Alaska Native people. Exhilarated by the thought of having my own piece of traditional indigenous garb, I humbly obliged.³⁰

As Danielle was measuring my arm length to ensure she had enough fabric, Marilyn, the Executive Director approached us. Marilyn watched with amusement as Danielle, who couldn’t have been much taller than 5’2, got on her tip toes to drape the fabric over my shoulders.

“Tall, white *kass’aq!*” Marilyn said with a hearty chuckle.

I had heard the term *kass’aq* at least two dozen times by this point, usually used in the pejorative sense. Debbie used it to describe the missionaries and school personnel that her

³⁰ As grateful as I was to have been the recipient of this fine gift, which Danielle spent hours producing, she expressed equal gratitude towards me for having given *her* the opportunity to gift the *qaspek*.

grandmother had warned her about. *The kass'ags are coming. Don't say a word—don't tell them anything. Don't tell them your secrets. What we eat, what we do—because if they find what we do out they'll come and take you away.* Marilyn's use of the term, however—how she said it and the context in which she said it—did not have the same connotation as Debbie, Tamara, Claire, and countless others. Hers was a not a comment indicating impending harm or threat, but one of a more playful nature. She wasn't charging me with cultural appropriation, but heckling me in a harmless and humorous manner. In a way, this moment built solidarity. I understood the use of the term and could appreciate the humor with which it was intended. The three of us shared a brief laugh and moved on. The interaction, brief and benign as it was, exerted a certain influence in how I presented in subsequent interactions with other women. From that moment forward, I frequently found myself initiating the use of the term *kass'ag* with women in discussing all matters culture- and race-related. In most instances, employing this very loaded term seemed to bring a sense of relief to women. Calling attention to the elephant in the room seemed to lighten the atmosphere and liven up discussions. In short, learning the fine art of laughing at myself took me a long way in establishing rapport with most of the women.

I raise this observation to demonstrate the significant variability within the local community in terms of how Native women interpret and react to race and culture. Like all social dynamics in this community, there was no uniform response to the issues of white-Native interactions.

What "Native" Means

During my conversation with Carrie, I asked her to explain to me what being Yup'ik meant to her. She briefly paused and then coyly smiled. "I remember this one joke someone told me," she began. "When a white man asked us who and what we are, we say: 'You pick.'"

Carrie's joke (to which I was admittedly slow on the uptake) demonstrated a common thread among most women: Native identity is not singularly defined. The meaning of Nativehood was challenging, initially, for most women to articulate. When asked "What does being Alaska Native mean to you?" most women stated that they never had given the matter much thought. "It's just what I was born into," said Alice. "It's just who I was."

Respect

Women defined their Nativehood largely through personal and family values; the most paramount of these values was respect. Respect was broadly defined by the women, inclusive of respecting and caring for elders and children, respecting the land, helping others in need, togetherness, open-mindedness, and knowing one's roots. Tamara explained that she always interpreted Yup'ik culture and values as a circle of Karma. "You just always want to be able to help somebody," she said. Similarly, Sandra emphasized the altruism as a foundational value in Native culture, explicitly denouncing ulterior motives when it comes to helping others in need:

Helping each other and help my auntie, uncles and cousins who are disabled. That's how I was raised—to help them. Help them when I go visit them. You don't ask for money or nothing—you just help them. They'll talk to you while you're helping them. They tell us these things in the community—what to be aware of, what kind of people—those things.

Language

Native identity also expressed itself through a wide variety of cultural practices, most of which predated Western contact and still live on today in Bristol Bay. Speaking a Native language ranked very highly among these practices. About half the women were able to speak their Native tongue either fluently or almost fluently. When discussing Native languages, women linked the ability to speak as an expression of other Alaska Native values, namely respect for elders, and understanding one's roots. For many Native-speaking women, language came largely

from grandparents. Ginny, whose first language was Yup'ik, attributes her fluency to regular exposure to her grandparents, who did not speak English:

My grandparents didn't speak English; just little things—little words that we taught them. Actually, nobody was allowed to speak English around my grandparents. Speaking English wasn't allowed because they couldn't understand English. That was part of respecting them.

The value of Native language was also instilled in Debbie by her grandparents, advising her to “never lose your language even if you move away.”

Steaming

Another powerful source of Native culture and pride in Bristol Bay is the use of the *maqii* (steam bath). Taking a steam or “making *maqii*” is a timeless pastime in Bristol Bay.

Historically, the *maqii* served two purposes. First, the *maqii* primarily serves a cleansing function. Prior to the modern advent of running water and indoor plumbing in rural homes, the *maqii* was utilized as an efficient means to cleanse multiple people at the same time using minimal water supply. Similar to a sauna one would find at a gym or beauty spa, the *maqii* consists of a closed chamber with open seating, as well as a woodstove to heat up pots of water (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Unlike the saunas I am accustomed to however, the *maqii* is substantially hotter. The room heats up to about 200 degrees. As women described it, the *maqii* is the best way to draw out bodily toxins, dirt, and oils. Men, women, and children usually steam separately. There are also public and private *maqii*s.

Figure 4.1: *Outside view of a Maqii*



Figure 4.2: *Inside View of a Maqii*



In addition to cleansing, the *maqii* also serves as a local institution for socialization. According to Ginny, the *maqii* was historically utilized by village men to prepare and plan for

hunting trips, as well as prepare for war with rival villages. Contemporary uses of the *maqii* today run the gamut from gossiping to community planning to simply decompressing at the end of the week. Tamara explained to significance of the *maqii*, highlighting the physical benefits (the cleanse), as well as manner in which the *maqii* serves a social support mechanism:

It's just a compact little community meeting. But you get to cleanse yourself and I know some of the elders that pray while scrubbing their arms and stuff. It's a cleansing—almost ritual. It's so therapeutic. I even catch myself steaming along so I can get that relax. IT relaxes your muscles and draws out all the toxins—it is just overall therapy for me. But when it involves other family and other people you're comfortable and safe with, it makes it more enjoyable because you don't get to leave your house that much with family and work, so when you get to steam, you're in that little community. It's your little timeout. It's like a support meeting. It's with friends and family you're comfortable and safe with. It's really nice.

Religious Adherence

The communities of Bristol Bay are predominantly Eastern Orthodox Christian. Almost all the women either belonged to the Russian Orthodox or Moravian churches, although two women identified as 7th Day Adventists. Belief in the church and its dogma was mixed among the women. Some women appeared as quite dogmatic and maintained relatively fixed views on the subject of religion. Brenda's grandfather, for instance was a church chief during Brenda's childhood and warned her against ever changing her religion. "He must have said it over and over because it really stuck in my brain," Brenda said. "I still feel strongly about that to this day." Likewise, Diane fervently admonished against changing religions. In fact, a major component of her falling out with her mother involved this very issue:

I can remember I was little, she brought me to the Moravian Church. I'm not Moravian; I'm an Orthodox Christian. But she brought me there, I don't remember what we did or what happened. Then she brought me to a Baptist Church and I could remember not wanting to go there or be there because that's not what church I went to. It's not what I knew. It wasn't who I was. It was when she lived in Anchorage that I would go and stay with her and visit a couple nights, and they would try to get me to read from their bible. I flat out refused; I wouldn't

read one word. I didn't care if I got in trouble. I wasn't going to budge to learn another religion.

Some women, however, identified as more omnistic, demonstrating acceptance and even practicing religious tenets of multiple religious practices. Many stated that they have explored alternative churches and have embraced diverse spiritual beliefs during early adulthood. Eva situated her religious beliefs primarily as a function of place, noting "in Eastwind Bay, they have the Moravian Church. In Drifter Sound, they have 7th Day Adventist. So I grew up as a Moravian and a 7th Day Adventist. Religion is religion." Similarly, Alice identifies as both Russian Orthodox Christian (the prominent church of Angler Gulch) and Moravian (the prominent church of Eastwind Bay). "I wasn't allowed to attend the Moravian church growing up, but after I moved away from my parents, I started to," she explained. "I was curious. I go to other churches a lot. It's interesting to see the differences. Terry embraced a similar ideology, emphasizing the possibility of potential truths from all religions:

I went to every denomination there was to find where I wanted to fit in or find what I wanted to believe. We were baptized in Russian Orthodox but I couldn't understand a lot of it because it was in Russian, so I kind of lost interest in that. So mom kept us in vacation bible school with the Moravian church and then also we would attend the 7th day Adventist Church. Then I got saved in the Baptist church as far as accepting the Lord into my heart. So I've been all over the place. I went to mass in the Catholic Church. I went to this one church in an apartment complex when I was going to school and they were African American, so we got down and we got funky (laughs). Let me put it this way: What I do understand about religion is that I believe in God and that there is one God only. So that's my denomination. I've been known to attend churches where its "wow this is unusual." But if someone is going to invite me to go and celebrate their religion, I won't hesitate. As long as their good people and they're worshipping the man upstairs, if it works for them, then so be it.

Maddy also emphasized that her theological practices have less to do with religious obligation and more to do with spirituality. A self-proclaimed "heretic," Maddy has been criticized by others for "cherry-picking" parts of the bible as explained below:

The act of going to church gives me time to ponder spiritual issues. I would say I'm a bit of a heretic when it comes to actual theology. I have had issues with this idea that there would be a God who would say to the people "if your sacrifice animals, I will forgive your sins." What the heck is with that? What kind of God says that? And pretty much I decided that's not a kind of God I could worship. So I just kind of threw that out and decided "no I don't buy into that." And then there was the issue of being told that God loves you more than anymore. God is love incarnate. What kind of God would condemn people to hell for all eternity because they couldn't get their act together in a lifetime? Really? I'm going to give you one lifetime and if you can't get it together, then you're going to burn in lifetime for an eternity? I don't think so. Through time, bits of the theology just had to go because it didn't square with what I would expect.

Subsistence

Subsistence was also described as a source of cultural and social vitality. Hunting, gathering and foraging activities are not merely quaint traditions, but anchors of Native existence. Participation in subsistence activities (mostly fishing, but also hunting, trapping, snaring, and berry-picking) not only provides access to food, but also provides a means through which to exercise other Native values, especially togetherness and caring for elders. Subsistence involves families working together, maintaining strong relationships with each other, the land and the community. Subsistence often brought extended families together to ensure the success of the harvest and distribution of the resource for the benefit of the community. Taking care of the community, especially elders, was particularly stressed by many of the women in explaining the socio-cultural importance of subsistence. Sandra situated her Yup'ik identity through subsistence practices, emphasizing respect for the land, helping others, and communication with elders as cornerstone values:

I was raised to prepare Native food for winter. That's what Yup'ik is to me. Born and raised in your community. Herring and Kelp fishing. That's Yup'ik to me. Take care of our land and use the land. Try not to leave trash in the wilderness. Pick up after yourself. I was raised to do that.

Violet explained that elders always took priority in dividing and divvying up subsistence harvests:

We would divide our moose meat up and we would always make sure the elders had meat before us, and the same with fish and berries. The elders always had food before us. I really got that drilled into my head that the elders came first. Elders and children come first before ourselves.

Growing up with her elderly grandmother, Tamara also stressed the importance of the community coming together to ensure the survival of everyone through subsistence activities:

We lived off subsistence. We did a lot of fishing and cousins would bring in the meat if they had extra from their homes. Like if they killed a porcupine, they'd bring it to Grandma. Ducks and geese—the men and distant cousins would bring that portion.

Explaining *why* one subsists was a difficult question for women to answer. It is not something they only *do*; it is who they *are*³¹. Equally emphasizing togetherness and survival, Diane succinctly described how subsistence defined and shaped her growing years, as well as her children's:

There was always fishing and always picking berries and hunting and smelting—just participating to be together and to live. To know how to live off the land and be with each other. We're not always going to get along, but that's just what we do. Now with my kids, we do everything together—picking berries and hiking to find berries, getting highbush cranberries, hiking up the mountain—my husband, kids, and me.

Maddy also discussed the symbiotic relationship between subsistence and togetherness. Five years ago, her father retired from the commercial fishing industry, a decision Maddy attributed solely to the lack of familial support. “The only reason he retired is because he couldn't get his daughters or grandson to go with him,” she said. “So he figured if he couldn't fish with his family, he'd better throw in the towel.”

SENSE OF PLACE

³¹ Ginger: Bristol Bay is the last surviving fish culture on the planet. Everything we are and do is all about fish and that relationship to the land. What feeds our pocketbook, what feeds our physical body, what feeds our soul, what feeds our culture and relationships with each other—it's all about that connection with that resource.

During one of my conversations with Sandra, she recalled an experience while working for Bristol Bay's social services department. As an elderly services employee, she had frequent contact with village elders. She described one interaction with an elderly man in which he recalled observing the most recent solar eclipse. Based on the duration of the event, which the elder claimed to be unusually short, this eclipse was seen as a bad omen. He warned that eventually "we would have no more winter. We would only have summer." Reflecting on the current winter, which was uncharacteristically mild according to most of the women, Sandra insisted the elder's premonition to be accurate. Admittedly, Sandra's claims linking the natural phenomenon of the moon passing over the sun to the seasonality of Bristol Bay were met with initial skepticism. Clearly, she was making science out of superstition (or at the very least, coincidence). A closer examination of Sandra's narrative, however, reveals more than mere Native folklore. Regardless of whether or not Sandra's beliefs on the relatively mild winter are scientifically plausible, her brief story does illustrate something distinct about her worldview. Her understanding, awareness, and attachment to her physical space are not only shaped by her social and political relationships, but also by a more primal connection to that physical space.

Another prevailing marker of Alaska Native identity, therefore, was women's strong connection to their motherland. Discourses of subsistence practices and production, extended families, language, and social relationships appeared to imbue women with a rich sense of place. It has been proposed that Native people traditionally perceive themselves as embedded in a complex web of "dynamic and mutually-respectful relationships among all the natural features and phenomena of their homelands" (Cajete, 2000, p. 178). As discussed earlier, despite the challenges of Bristol Bay communities and villages, from high costs of living to unforgiving winters to high rates of interpersonal violence, the vast majority of women derived their

understanding of and attachment to the world from the natural rhythms and life cycles of their physical environment. As mentioned earlier, a cornerstone value among virtually all the women was respect for the land. I found that this respect stems from a profound sense of connection to place.

Understanding women's sense of place was perhaps the most challenging component of the fieldwork, as this was arguably the linchpin of Native life and vitality. Undoubtedly, this was yet another marker of social, cultural, and spiritual difference between the women and myself. I do not experience sense of place in the same ways as Native women. I am not, nor ever have been, intrinsically connected to my own motherland and I do not feel at all spiritually anchored in any place I have lived. The research process itself demonstrates this clearly. In order to execute this project, I had to relocate to Alaska. I took care of all the usual moving formalities that I'd done several times before. I moved out of my one-bedroom apartment, rented a storage unit, and spent an entire day hauling my belongings and meager possessions into a tiny 5x8 space, reserving only the bare necessities that I could cram into two suitcases that would accompany me on my journey. I put in a change-of-address at the post office, notified my banking institutions, and canceled my newspaper subscription. I would be away during tax season, so I'd made arrangements with my accountant to handle everything remotely. Just to be on the safe side, I double-checked my booking at the Sockeye Inn, an extended-stay hotel that I would make my temporary home while I braved the Anchorage rental market in search of something a bit more long-term. I said, or more accurately e-mailed, my farewells to the few people that I'd told about my plans. I'm not much for maudlin send-offs. After all, I wouldn't be gone forever, and everyone was just a phone call, an email, or a text message away. Any curveballs that would be thrown at me once I landed in the field? Well, I'd just have to roll with

the punches and figure it out. One evening at 8pm in early January, I boarded a plane leaving Los Angeles International Airport, and arrived in Anchorage at 12:30am local time. My connection and ties to Southern California did not hinder my transition. Even though many acquaintances and family members alike assumed I must have lost my mind for leaving sunny California to make a temporary home in Alaska, especially in the dead of winter, I had a job to do. Everything was carefully and mechanically planned out. Relocating was an instrumental move and nothing more. Thoughts of how this substantial shift in geographic, political, and cultural space might impact my personal identity didn't enter my consciousness.

Conversely, much of women's identity and self-realization was rooted in place. There was no speaking of oneself without also speaking of one's village. When asked what the best part of living in one's respective community was, many simply answered that it is home. "The reason I like living here is I have a home; I call that my base," explained Debbie. "And it always will be." It was interesting to hear Debbie proclaim her village as her permanent home, given that she left Alaska for over 10 years to raise her children in Oregon. In fact, a number of women who had left their village for an extended period of time still situated their village as home, almost as if their time spent away never happened. Ginny moved with her family to Washington State for about two years. She explained the cultural dissonance she experienced:

I couldn't do it. I saw too much ugliness. My kids were being consumed by the city and I had to send my daughter home a few months early because I was so worried. She was literally being eaten by the city. She was forgetting who she really was. She was forgetting the way of life. I didn't mind them learning how to live in the city and what not to do and what to do, but I panicked. When we moved there, we were all excited and then bang! Made plans to do this and that and all of a sudden I panicked. It hit me hard. *Oh my God! How am I going to teach my kids how to do subsistence because subsistence is a hands-on deal? How am I going to do that?*

One afternoon in early April, I received a call from Debbie. At the time, she was visiting her daughter in Anchorage and wanted to see if I'd be interested in meeting her for coffee. Always thrilled with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, I immediately accepted her invitation and met her at a restaurant in mid-town. For about three hours, we guzzled coffee and chatted about numerous things, from her daughter's pregnancy to her recent resignation from her job. Though this was only the third time I had interacted with Debbie, I felt as though I'd known her for years. As always, the topic of sexual violence in the villages arose. Debbie has a lot to say on the subject, both as a survivor of domestic and sexual violence and also as a former victim's advocate. At one point in the conversation, as Debbie took stock of the numerous horrors of rural Alaska that have personally affected her, as well as friends and family, she insisted that she couldn't live anywhere else. Like Ginny, Debbie's identity is heavily rooted in place. Her village is a safe haven, notwithstanding her personal experiences with trauma:

“It's happening all over the villages and I don't know why it's so prevalent. But you know what? I find it scary here in Anchorage. I'm scared to be out and around even at Carr's on 13th. Those homeless people—it's so scary. I wouldn't tell my daughter this, but I actually can't wait to get back home. I really miss my village.”

In addition to feelings of comfort and security, home also was defined in terms of family and relationships. Women's ties to family, whether consanguineal or affinal relatives, often perpetuated a sense of place for a number of women. Tamara described how familial ties within her community imbue her with a sense of identity and purpose, as well as a sense of security. When asked what the best part of living in her community was, Tamara emphasized these relationships:

I would have to say you're closer and you're with family. My mom lives here, my cousins live here, my aunts live here. Just family. It's being home for me. That's about the only good thing I can think of [about Dillingham]. It's home. It's

always been home. I feel acknowledged. You don't have to be afraid because this is home.

Likewise, Claire acknowledged the foundation of family in grounding her in the community. Recently, Claire has contemplated leaving Dillingham due to lack of jobs, bad influences, and strained relations with others in the community. When I asked Claire how the thought of leaving Dillingham made her feel, she simply replied, "Well, my daughter lives here, her dad lives here, my mom and dad live here, my sister lives here, a lot of uncles, aunts, cousins. I can leave, but I love them more than anything." It was not uncommon for women facing challenges in their respective communities to weigh the pros and cons of leaving their village. Over the years, Alice has become exacerbated with the social and political tensions in her village, particularly the strained relations between families. "There is a lot of fighting between families, especially in the village—family against this family," she explained. "Like people would choose their own family for jobs and just people picking on each other because of what family they were in. It's really stupid. I really can't stand it there, but I do because my parents are there." Place also fosters a sense of solidarity. On occasion, women emphasized that the comfort, security, and sense of belonging in the community is a result of kinship their community. "I think the generic region or culture kind of brings us together and lets us know who we really are and where we come from and where we're going," said Claire. Similarly, in differentiating between living in Anchorage versus living in Dillingham, Violet situated Dillingham as home, noting "I enjoy being around people with similar backgrounds as me. Or similar value sense of value of life or traditional values." Maddy echoed Violet's and Claire's analysis, adding that the small and connected nature of the community affords everyone the opportunity to contribute and make a difference:

I like knowing a lot of people and a lot of people know me, so you have this comfort level with having known people forever. So I guess that's the best part. And just knowing where people have been and come from. Maybe someone grows up to be a scary person, but you remember when they were 12 and had all the potential in the world and maybe at 44 they don't have so much potential. They look used up, dried up, and throw away; but you can still remember them the way they used to be before their life went left instead of right. I like that one person CAN make a difference; that it's small enough that if you really believe in something, you can get others to fall in line, help out and do stuff.

Subsistence life also shapes the sense of place for women. When I asked Tina what the good points of growing up in Halibut Point were, she succinctly replied “the fishing.” On Dillingham, Claire also praised the community for its richness in natural resources. “We have good, good, good water. I *love* water. There's a lot of food—moose, caribou, goose, spruce hens, berries. All organic. No pesticides, no hormones, nothing.” Additionally, subsistence activities largely inform the extent to which women understand and are attached to their world. Successful subsistence harvests, after all, ultimately hinge on the natural rhythms of the environment. In this regard, I learned just how fragile the ecosystem of Bristol Bay (and the rest of Alaska's, for that matter) really is. If the precipitation level isn't just so or if the wind gusts in the wrong direction, the salmon don't swim upriver. If the summer temperatures are less than ideal, the moose don't wander down from the mountains. If the winter isn't cold enough, wild berries won't grow. Indeed, even the smallest changes in climate can have profound impacts on all that lives there. It isn't surprising, therefore, to understand the deep respect that Native people have for the land, which has provided for numerous generations. When I asked women about some of their worries and fears as they pertain to the community, issues of pollution and generally disrespect for the land arose frequently.

Claire described Dillingham in the summer months, which is when the population of the community essentially doubles due to the influx of outside fishermen:

It's very dirty. I mean, the amount of vehicles driving around increases like 50 percent and a lot of them are old, old trucks and they leak oil all over the town, the roads get all rainbow-y and then when it rains you can see rainbows going down into the things that catch water. And those just go right out to the ocean.

Similarly, Ginny expressed a deep dismay for the state of the physical environment and the waste of land resources in Eastwind Bay:

I've never seen so much trash in my whole life, ever. Back when I was growing up, there was nothing. It's just terrible. It makes me sad. Even the houses that you go to now and visit, you see trash just on the floor. Ugh! Trash. It was better and simpler then. Sometimes is tiring and annoying to see this, but that's part of life now, I guess. I've seen food that has been wasted—the food from the land like moose meat or crabmeat or salmon. They're just thrown away like trash that could be given to other people. It's very hurtful.

Debbie lamented similar issues in Drifter Sound, criticizing the North Shore for its flippant waste and littering. “If I took you to the North Shore,” she began, “all you would see is garbage bags piled up on the waterfront. It's everywhere!”

Some women also described how early interactions and experiences with place shaped their early development and grounded them in Native culture. In particular, Nancy and Ginny described the ways in which disciplinary practices within their families forged relationships with place. Nancy explained how her grandparents integrated place into disciplinary practices, while simultaneously teaching introducing her to her Native roots:

I was always sent with one of my grandmas—one of my grandmas took me everywhere she went to learn about plants because she was a medicine woman. Whenever I was in trouble, she would make me climb in the plants and get her Devil Clubs. The Devil Clubs are wild celery. They grow really big and have huge thorns on them—bigger than roses. And she always wanted the one that was growing really straight and tall and always in the middle. So that was my punishment (laughs). If you were naughty, you were the one that went in and got it. She didn't spank or make you get a switch—you had to go in and as you were crawling around, you thought about what you did.

Likewise, Ginny described how she continues these traditional disciplinary practices with her children today. Like Nancy, spanking, hitting, or yelling were not used as disciplinary

measures in Ginny's family. Instead, self-reflection and self-regulation are achieved through interactions with the physical environment:

Instead of scolding children or grounding them, when they get into trouble, I'll ask my dad or another elder. And then they'll take them out into the wilderness, but when they get back, they have to explain to me why they did that. It's not about grounding them or scolding them; it's about "think about what you did, but at the same time while you're thinking about it, you have hunting or splitting fish or gathering something. When you come back, you explain to me why you did that." I'd rather have them go to family and help them out, or teach them what goes on in a different family.

ENDURING CHALLENGES IN BRISTOL BAY

Women identified a number of social, cultural, political, and health-related challenges facing them, their families, and their communities. While some of these issues appeared to be the result of relatively recent economic and political transformations that have occurred in Native communities, other problems were discussed as more enduring and rooted in historical exploitation of indigenous peoples, as well as the social dynamics of rural communities. While Chapter 5 will discuss contemporary challenges facing Bristol Bay communities, as well as the economic and political transformations that potentiated these issues, the focus of this section is on enduring challenges and the historical and social dynamics that inform them.

Language Loss

The ability to speak one's mother tongue was a major source of cultural pride and Native identity. Conversely, the inability to speak evoked feelings of sadness and inadequacy, along with the grim foregone conclusion that Native culture is dying. Fluent and non-fluent women of all ages collectively expressed the urgency of Native language reaching extinction. Ginny positioned the role of indigenous language in her village as paramount to ensuring the connection between elders and children:

The elders and the younger generations now—that hurts me the most. The younger generation doesn't know how to speak our language and understand it. That breaks my heart. The communication between the elders and our kids is *very* important, but you don't see it anymore. At all. It's very saddening. Our language is like a barrier between life and death.

Ginny's simple assertion bore eloquent witness to the important and complex connection between communication and preservation (or lack thereof) of Native culture. Like many Native traditions and practices, command of the one's Native language is highly linked to notions of identity, heritage and solidarity. Communication via indigenous oral language also fuels the rich tradition of oral storytelling, whereby history, customs, rituals, and legends are shared through vivid narratives. Speaking one's Native tongue, therefore, allows the people to live in a world of local, face-to-face, personal relations much different from the national and anonymous relations characteristic of the non-Native world (Feit, 2004). Like subsistence activities, Native language is not just a means of communication, but inherently tied to identity. "I really wish I was taught when I was younger because it would have been easier," said Eva. "I know some words, but I am not fluent like I want to be. I want to learn more about my culture because it's a part of me. It's who I am. Our culture is slowly dying and we're just losing our ways."

Native linguistic work, by and large, is a relatively recent advent. Dictionaries, orthographies, and other educational materials and curricula did not begin appearing until the 1960s and 1970s. The first school bilingual programs were launched in four Yup'ik villages in the early 1970s. Prior to this, language was almost exclusively an oral tradition. In short, if your family didn't speak it, you didn't learn it. Tamara, a fluent Yup'ik speaker, emphasized that, like all languages, frequent and sustained exposure is necessary. She lamented that her speaking skills have been on the decline since her grandmother died:

I haven't been exposed to it much since my grandma died at 14. I catch myself trying to remember a lot more because I don't speak it and I'm not exposed to it. I

actually went and got a Yup'ik dictionary just to try and refresh my memory because I'm losing it.

The loss of Native language has been historically linked to Euro-American influence and institutions, namely schools, governance, and organized religion. The legacy of the boarding schools is perhaps the biggest blow to Alaska Native and American Indian culture, playing one of the largest roles in the complete destruction of Native language and culture, more generally. Boarding schools in Alaska were introduced largely in response to the thousands of orphaned children who survived the initial onslaught of disease and illness brought by white colonizers in the mid-19th century. The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) developed the boarding school system for American Indian students in the 19th century, with the explicit intent of assimilating these children. In the early part of the 20th century, academically talented Alaska Native students were sent to vocational boarding schools outside Alaska. In response to largely unsuccessful experiences of these students, the federal government created three vocational boarding schools for Natives in Alaska in the 1920s. However, these first boarding schools fell into disrepair, and in 1947 the BIA opened a single consolidated boarding school in Sitka, Mt. Edgecumbe (McDiarmid, 1984; Cotton, 1984). When Mt. Edgecumbe was full, Native students were sent to BIA boarding schools in other states, including Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon and Chilocco Indian School in Chilocco, Oklahoma (Alaska Natives Commission, 1994).

By and large, the boarding schools were part-and-parcel of the systemic effort to extinguish indigenous culture. Alaska Native history, Native sciences, indigenous parenting skills, and indigenous languages were not promoted. For many Native children, efforts to maintain one's indigenous background and identity were met with severe consequences. Brutal and borderline tortuous punishments were reserved for children caught speaking their Native tongue, including beatings, whippings, mouth washings with lye soap, and prolonged heat

exposure during lockup in small metal boxes. Debbie frequently was forced to stand still in front of the chalkboard, her nose in center of a drawn circle, for asking questions in Yup'ik in the classroom. The denial of Native culture has been linked to a host of lasting effects, not least of which include lasting trauma (including PTSD and suicidal ideation), difficulties integrating back into families and communities, and poor parenting skills (Hirshberg & Sharp, 2005). "I was never able to express myself until I got older," Debbie said. "That was a huge part of my troubles." Nancy also noted the insidious manner in which the cumulative and cascading effects of the boarding school experience cut across generations in her family:

My dad was taken down to the Chemawa Indian School. Often times they weren't allowed to speak their language. They couldn't speak because the teachers couldn't understand them and how could they control and teach them if they couldn't speak English? In order to get them to speak English they had to force them, which in their mind was a great idea. If I was in those days and thought the same way and didn't know what we know now, sure I could force someone to quit talking like that because I can't understand them. So, my mom and dad didn't teach us Tlingit. They didn't teach us what we needed to know to survive in the Tlingit world. My whole generation was sent away to receive an education and they weren't at home learning how to provide and live off the land. They lost all the experience of living off the land when they went to school. They received different values at school and then they come back to the village and don't even know the channel of the river. They don't know how to trap; they don't know how to hunt.

The legacies of the boarding school experience and assimilationist practices often were evoked during discussions of language loss. Women often situated their inability to speak their Native language as a direct result of their families' boarding and mission school traumas. "We got raised to be 'American,'" said Terry. "My mom—when she was taken from her village to be raised by her grandmother—she went to mission school. All she knew was Native language, and they taught her English and that's her primary language now. She doesn't even remember her Native language." "My momma did not want to teach us because she was in that era when the school teachers came up," said Brenda. "She was in elementary school and Yup'ik was her first

language. When she went to school, they didn't treat her so well when she spoke her own tongue. So she chose not to teach us Yup'ik."

Despite changing times and the move toward formal acceptance of Native culture and language, the persistence of the effects of the deplorable school experiences was clear. While both Maddy and Claire recognized abusive school practices as a thing of the past, the inter-generational trauma of language loss still thrives. Maddy explained how the devaluation of Native language was latently instilled in youth, creating a sense of shame and barrier to cultural pride:

It was not anything of value and something to be looked down upon. Even when I went to school, we would have boarding home students who came to do high school from the villages whose first language was Native. It was never outright looked down upon, but you absorbed that it was not good for Yup'ik to be your first language, because you had an accent, you didn't have proper grammar.

Claire echoed Maddy's analysis, also emphasizing that although the days of brutal discipline for speaking one's Native tongue are long over, the hesitancy to teach younger generations remains:

I just wish with my heart that I knew Yup'ik fluently, but I don't. My mom told us when we were growing up [that] she didn't want us to know it because she was afraid that maybe our teachers would beat us like they beat her. But no, they wouldn't have.

Though Central Alaskan Yup'ik is the largest of the state's Native languages, both in terms of the size of its population and the number of speakers (official figures estimate approximately 10,000 fluent speakers), the impact of language loss in Bristol Bay cannot be minimized. As women lamented the loss of Native language (whether within themselves, within their family, or within the community), they provided keen observations on how this loss, in

addition to the decline in other cultural/indigenous activities, potentiated the pervasive violence within Native families and villages. This is elaborated on in Chapter 6.

Privacy

As discussed earlier, women's identity is heavily rooted in place. Quite often, women defined place in terms of associations with others. Despite a low population density, familial and acquaintance networks are extraordinarily dense, with most women recognizing that most people in villages are related, or at the very least, well known to one another. While women generally touted this social dynamic as a strength of their community, they also discussed some of the pitfalls of this. "Everyone is so close to each other and there's no privacy and everyone knows everything about everyone," said Alice. "Everyone is in everyone else's business here," observed Terry. "I think that kind of thing goes on everywhere, but you really feel it in a small town."

Indeed, a large body of rural scholarship has pointed to the virtual lack of anonymity and little hope for confidentiality in rural communities (Lewis, 2008; Roberts, Battaglia, & Epstein, 1999). With a hint of annoyance in her voice, Diane reflected on village life and her wishes for more solitude:

The first thing that comes to mind is everybody knows everything about everyone. And I feel like—I don't have anything to hide, but my life is not an open book. Like "I love you but I love you over there." So you could say I like my privacy. I'm not going to just go in, have a big group hug with everybody and tell everybody my life story—all my happiness and all my boo-hoos. I'm just fine by myself.

Some women discussed gossip as an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of dense village acquaintanceship networks. Interestingly, while Tamara heralded her tight-knit relationships in the community as a source of strength, she concurrently identified the gossip that comes with that as the worst part:

Being a local, I've been exposed to it all my life. I've been gossiped about when I'm doing good; I've been gossiped about when I'm doing bad. The gossip is overwhelming.

Claire also identified the catch-22 situation of her position in a tight-knit community, noting what while knowing everyone in the community provides a sense of security and comfort, it comes at a cost:

I know everyone and they know me. And that could be kind of a bad thing because I kind of have a bad reputation this town. I've been looking for a job for a long time and I don't think I'll get one because of my reputation.

Alcoholism

Research has consistently identified American Indians and Alaska Natives as at the highest risk of alcohol abuse compared to any other racial group (Chartier & Caetano, 2009). Native adolescents tend to have earlier onset of alcohol abuse (Miller, Beauvais, Burnside, & Jumper-Thurman, 2008) and progress more quickly into regular use than any other racial or cultural group (Herring, 1994). It is widely believed that few Native families remain unaffected, either directly or indirectly, by the effects of alcohol abuse and addiction (Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004). It was no surprise, therefore, that every woman discussed the harrowing trauma of alcohol abuse, whether experiencing it first-hand or witnessing inter-generational cycles of abuse within their families. All but three women classified themselves as alcohol-dependent at some point in their lives. Of these, eight were in recovery, with sobriety periods ranging from six months to 32 years. The remaining seven women expressed ongoing struggles with alcohol addiction or challenges in maintaining sobriety. Alcohol-dependent women (whether active users or in recovery) also discussed lengthy family histories of alcohol addiction, including alcohol abuse by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and romantic partners. Every woman expressed concerns over alcohol use and misuse in their respective community.

Despite the magnitude of this public health crisis, there is also immense diversity in substance abuse among Native cultures and communities. Epidemiologic evidence points to substantial differences in alcohol abuse within and across Native cultures (Beals, Novins, Whitesell, Spicer, Mitchell, & Manson, 2005; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Johnson, & Chen, 2006). It stands to reason, therefore, that the forces driving alcohol abuse and addiction are also quite varied. Though there are numerous factors that shape alcohol use and misuse, I focus on two specific factors that appear to reflect longstanding and ongoing socio-cultural challenges within communities. Women's discourse on alcohol abuse (including their personal struggles with addiction, as well as family history of abuse) revealed two historical socio-cultural factors that have primed Bristol Bay communities and people for alcoholism. These included the fishing culture of Bristol Bay, as well as the intergenerational cycle of alcohol abuse.

Fishing Culture in Bristol Bay

Any discussion of commercial fishing in Bristol Bay inevitably evoked discourses of alcohol abuse and addiction. Up until about the late 1990s, Bristol Bay (Dillingham, in particular) was characterized as a booming, thriving community. The economic viability of the commercial fisheries was such that residents could attain a whole year's worth of living in exchange for a few months of work. The real price (adjusted for inflation) of sockeye salmon from 1975 to 1999 was anywhere from two to five times the average real value between 2000 and 2010. Flush with excellent profit margins and surplus cash, community residents enjoyed a hedonistic and over-indulgent lifestyle. Wendy, a victim advocate at SAFE and a 40-year resident of Bristol Bay, described this lifestyle:

In the mid-seventies, Dillingham was rolling in money. *Rolling* in it! There was never going to be an end to the red gold, which was the fish. Never! And people lived that lifestyle. They drank hard, they played hard, they worked hard. The tenders would bring up cases of whiskey and give it to the fishermen when they

tied up. We were losing people all the time—falling overboard because they were so stinkin’ drunk. And the way the socialized drinking was—it was drink until you were shit-faced drunk. The bar used to be open ‘til 5 in the morning, 7 days a week. They’d close at 5 in the morning, open up again at 8 in the morning, long enough for them to clean the bar, restock it, and open it back up. And there would be people standing at the door at 8:00 in the morning. Everybody drove drunk and “oh, well!”

Many women that worked in the commercial fishing industry, whether on the boats or in the canneries, all described the process of getting caught up in alcohol abuse and addiction.

Brenda worked in a cannery, as well as on a processor, during her 20s. She explained how this working environment exacerbated her alcoholism:

Every chance I got, I drank. I always had something in my hand. I can remember being drunk for a whole month—day and night. By 4pm prior to getting off, I’d start drinking. That was at the cannery. The bars stayed open until 5am, and I use to go and be a waitress at the bar. At 10pm, I’d go to the bar, drink some more, stay until 5, go to bed, wake up at 8, go to work, then start drinking again. In the fall time, when the fishermen were done, we’d have a big party. It was constant. In the early 80s, I also took a job on a processor and drinking was really encouraged there too. We’d get off a boat for a while, go into town, and go party and drink.

Marcy’s entire family was involved in commercial fishing. Like Brenda (and other women, as well), Marcy characterized the fishing industry as a catalyst for alcohol abuse, addiction, and violence. She, like many others, pointed to the share system³² as being particularly encouraging of flippant spending:

After every fishing trip, they’d bring cases of wine or whiskey. Lot of ugly sights. Fights. And there were other neighbors that used to drink, too. Especially after fishing, everybody got money. Going to town just to make a booze run.

The fact that fishing culture was described as an environment breeding alcohol abuse is not surprising. Workplaces that are associated with high stress, job insecurity, long hours, and

³² As a commercial fisherman, you are not on a payroll. You do not receive a salary or wages. Your only income is your share of the catch. There are many different ways of figuring shares, but generally fishermen (i.e. captain, skipper, and other crewmen) shares are determined after accounting for vessel gear expenses and other direct costs (e.g. groceries, ice, fuel, etc.) are deducted from the gross stock (or total earnings).

isolation are believed to be catalysts for alcohol abuse (Ames & Grube, 1999; Holland & Wickham, 2002). These risk factors are common in industries that are primarily dictated by seasons, markets, and weather. As the women described it, the Bristol Bay fishery is the poster child for the confluence of all these risk factors. An extremely short fishing season dictates that fishermen put in extremely long hours (often at least 16 hours per day). Capricious fluctuation of sockeye salmon prices has created an enormous sense of job and economic insecurity in Bristol Bay, particularly after the proliferation of farmed salmon in North America. Treacherous tides create dangerous and sometimes deadly work environments for fishermen.

Witnessing Alcohol Abuse

With alcohol addiction shaping most of the women's own lives, about three quarters of the women witnessed alcoholism and addiction among numerous family members, including parents, grandparents, siblings, romantic partners, and other extended relatives. The ubiquitous presence of alcohol within families and within the community was characterized largely as timeless. "There's alcoholism in our family," said Terry. "It runs heavily through generations. My dad died from it. My uncles have died from it." Most women could not remember when they learned about alcohol use and its effects (i.e. intoxication), nor could they isolate the moment when their families succumbed to alcoholism. "Alcohol is probably in our community to the extent that we don't remember learning about people being drunk because it was always in our society growing up here," said Maddy. "It's not like you can remember learning about it because you were so little when you saw it."

Women often noted how alcoholism affected multiple generations of the family, as well as contributed to their own addiction issues. After moving in with her grandmother, Tamara

continued to see her alcoholic parents on and off. She attributes her own alcoholism to witnessing her mother's own abuse:

Me seeing my mom loaded and blacked out and passed out every time I saw her—I think it kind of stuck in my brain and the genetics also of having alcoholic parents also kicked in. So that and that combined—I automatically started to process my alcohol the same way I saw it processed. That was the norm for me. It wasn't normal for me to have a glass of beer—"hee hee that was fun, good night"—no. The norm for me was to suck down a bottle of whiskey, black out, pass out—that's what I saw. So that's all I ever knew.

Charlene similarly explained the very calculated and systematic manner in which multiple generations of her family succumbed to alcoholism:

My dad would get so abusive if he didn't have it. When he uses, that's where it gets out of control. He gets worse. And right after we left my dad, my mom, me, and my siblings (there was five of us) went to my grandparents. And I could remember my grandparents drinking. After my mom left my dad, I do remember seeing her doing drugs or drinking until I was 11. That's when I remember seeing her drinking and then onto my brothers. As I was growing older, it started going generation to generation.

Brenda commented on how the relative ease of accessing alcohol in her household shaped her addiction during her teenage years:

I remember seeing my grandpa drunk once, but I heard he did drink. My parents drank. My mama did not drink at the very beginning, but because my dad drank, she drank too. I could remember parties at our house and getting into the liquor, you know? Not once or twice, but several times. And that's probably what caused me to be an alcoholic at a young age, because alcohol was so accessible.

Ginny attributed inter-generational alcohol abuse in her family to biological factors. She implicated the role of genetics in shaping her family's proclivity towards alcohol abuse across three generations:

The alcohol use—it was happening with his dad. His dad was an alcoholic—my grandpa. Everything rubs off. A parent rubs off. Raising a child, the child does the same thing. It's like a heredity or it's in the genes.

In addition to serious personal and familial experiences with alcohol addiction, women also reported these issues at the community level. Some women discussed the making and use of homebrew and bootlegging as particularly problematic, particularly in the dry villages. Early studies on serious drinking use in Alaska Native villages suggest that alcohol use did not occur on any scale until there was widespread access to bottled liquor or the materials to make homebrew, both of which were readily available in the region by the 1940s (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Some women asserted that prohibitions on alcohol in certain villages do little to curb illegal production and consumption. Some chalk this up to simply resisting authority. Eva believes that alcohol use in Eastwind Bay (a dry village) is and always has been a response to the dry village laws. “It’s dry village. It always has been and I don’t think that will change,” she explained. “I’ve always thought that because it’s a dry community, that just makes people want to do it more.” Other women implicated the influence of exogamous marriage³³ in exacerbating alcohol infiltration in villages. Carrie believes that alcohol is brought into Ironside primarily by outside spouses. Similarly, according to Sandra, the influx of alcohol in Ironside is exclusively perpetrated by in-law spouses:

I believe in sobriety. I believe don’t bring alcohol into Ironside. What I have noticed is only the in-laws bring it into the village and they’ll be selling fifths. Only the in-laws. The in-laws that are not originally from Ironside. They’re the only ones that bring in that stuff.

On the other hand, some women acknowledged the problem of people from dry villages frequenting wet villages for the sole purpose of drinking. Brenda explained how Dillingham attracts drinkers from all over Bristol Bay:

³³ Within Yup’ik society, marriage between partners within the same local group was often a precautionary measure, as people from outside could not be trusted (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Those who married into another village were frequently advised to not disrupt the lives of those among who they came to live (Fienup-Riordan, 2005).

A lot of people live in dry communities in the bush areas, like Eastwind Bay, Ironside, Twin Hills—that have zero tolerance for alcohol. So they come over here and party it up. Some other villages, too. They just seem to drink for days and days and days—really good people and you would never know they had an issue in the village. But when they get to Dillingham, they let everything hang loose. Some of them—it’s sad because you know they stay drunk and spend every dime they have.

CONCLUSION

In 1936, poet and playwright Gertrude Stein observed in her seminal work, *The Geographical History of America*, that “in America, there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is. This is what makes America what it is.” At the time, Stein was commenting on the sheer space and “room-to-roam” of the American landscape that she viewed as paramount in shaping American cultural attitudes and mindsets. Eighty years later, I imagine Stein’s viewpoint would have shifted dramatically...unless she had taken up residency in Alaska. In Bristol Bay, space and place remain essential components of human nature. For most women, Bristol Bay is much more than their home town or a location of principal residence. Bristol Bay *made* them, creating their sensibilities and shaping their perspectives, as well as nurturing their maturation into adulthood.

As discussed at length, the social, economic, and demographic dynamics of this community challenge the dominant stereotype of a rural community as a homogenous entity. In Bristol Bay, there is substantial diversity in the population in terms of origins, length of residency, cultural/racial identity, education, and occupational status. Differences also occur between segments of the community in terms of the types of levels of participation in commercial employment and noncommercial resource harvesting activities. It is within the latter sector (i.e. subsistence) that women understood and made sense of their culture, traditions, and values.

It is not my intent to romanticize the values, practices and conditions that shaped women's identity and purpose. Far from the halcyon days of yore, surviving and thriving in rural Alaska is heavily dependent on one's ability to cope with the unique physical, economic and socio-cultural challenges that are daily realities for the people there. Strong bodies and strong minds are requisite qualities for making it here. It was not uncommon to hear stories of newcomers arriving in Bristol Bay, in search of the "Alaska experience, and calling it quits within a week, leaving as quickly as they came.

Typically, suburban sprawl has been implicated in obliterating the landscape and local culture of most of the United States' rural communities. This is not the case in Bristol Bay. In Chapter 5, I discuss how shifts in rural and political economy have engendered profound changes in the values, practices, and round of life of the Native community, effectively relegating the indigenous people to a neo-colonial status. These shifts, as I will explore in Chapters 6 and 7, are the cruxes of women's violence, exploitation, and subjugation.

CHAPTER 5: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY OR CASH AND CORPORATIONS?

It's not that violence has expanded and all of a sudden erupted; it was always there; it was just hidden behind a curtain. Up at my village, where I lived for many years, people would say "oh, look at those happy Native people." Without realizing what's really happening.

~Nancy

The theory of historical trauma was developed to explain current physical, mental health, and spiritual crises facing indigenous people today (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Broadly speaking, this theory maintains that indigenous people today are experiencing historical loss symptoms (e.g. depression, alcoholism, suicidal ideation, dysfunctional parenting, and aggression) as a result of the cross-generational transmission of trauma that originated with historical losses (e.g. loss of population, land, culture, language, etc.). Simply put, the past atrocities suffered by Native populations generations ago are highly connected to the current problems facing Native communities today. Given the diversity within the Native population, it is extremely difficult to make sweeping generalizations regarding the impact of historical trauma on Native persons, families, and communities (Gone, 2009). Therefore, I was interested in obtaining local views on how historical losses were connected to the modern problems facing women. In discussing historical legacies of colonization, assimilation and manifest destiny with the women, I discovered that there was considerable ambiguity in women's perception of historical trauma. For instance, some women demonstrated explicit anger when reflecting on the historic blows to the Native community in Bristol Bay. Reflecting on the boarding school era in rural Alaska and the near extinction of Native languages, Maddy said "I feel sad and angry and resentful that people were made to feel ashamed of who they were because another culture did not value that." On the other hand, some women regarded historical losses as a remnant of the past and a non-issue today. Many situated historical trauma as affecting their parents' generation, but not so much their own. "My mom's side—they were really affected because of the family

separation. But it's been too long for me to care," said Tina. Claire, with a hint of exasperation in her voice, stated "It was a mistake and it's forgiven. It's a long time ago!" Alice recently read a book on historical trauma and discussed how she has begun to refute the deterministic correlation between historical losses and current trauma:

Even though there is trauma and we have things like alcoholism and everything, I'm starting to change the way I feel about all of that. The way I feel now is "we all make our own choices." I still understand that all the trauma makes us who we are, but we still all have choices.

Though there was considerable ambiguity surrounding the subject of historical trauma and what this means to women in Bristol Bay, I suspect that certain enduring challenges, as articulated by the women (see Chapter 4), are symptomatic of that trauma, particularly the woes associated with language loss and the trans-generational abuse of alcohol. In addition to these foundational issues, women also discussed combating a number of contemporary problems facing themselves, their families, and their communities. Generally, these issues centered around notions of increasingly individualist attitudes and mindsets, lack of cooperation and like-mindedness, strained relationships, and inequality. Regardless of age, there was consensus among all women that the social and political climate of Bristol Bay has shifted—that the present is markedly different from the relative past.

While most women regarded the historical legacies of trauma and abuse against indigenous persons as distant memories, discussions of current challenges facing Native families, communities, and culture leads me to believe that relatively recent political and economic transformations (intended to benefit indigenous peoples) are repeating a familiar cycle of uncertainty, normlessness, and marginality within Native communities. Indeed, as women pontificated on the consequences of modernization and economic and political incorporation of

Native communities, there were convincing indications of a neo-colonial status gripping the Native population of Bristol Bay today.

In this chapter, therefore, I focus on the social, economic, and political structural transformations in Bristol Bay that have shaped the contemporary social issues facing the Native people of Bristol Bay. In particular, I address how these transformations potentiated an increasing reliance on cash-based economies and the general adoption of the corporate mentality, and how these disturbances have contributed to the loss of Native traditions and values, as evidenced by the decline in local economic participation, strained relationships within communities and villages, structural and social inequality, and the progressive dwindling of the collectivist mindset. In this chapter, I draw heavily on critical criminological perspectives, situating women and the broader Native community as subjects of systems of injustice and structural inequality fueled by Western economic interests.

A WATERSHED DECISION: LIMITED ENTRY IN THE BRISTOL BAY FISHERY

Over the past 100 years, many Alaskan coastal communities have experienced a transition from solely subsistence-based fisheries to commercial-based fisheries. Consequently, the human-fish relationship shifted from one solely based on subsistence, leadership and togetherness, to one also based on economic benefit and monetary value. Commercial fishing in Alaska is estimated to have begun roughly in the 1880s, with the demand for canned salmon sharply increasing on a yearly basis through the end of World War I. During this period, the salmon pack increased over six-fold from about one million cases to over 6.5 million cases. This massive growth occurred in the absence of any state or federal regulation. Production continued to increase and by the mid-1960s, the commercial catch declined significantly to a level of less than half the maximum yields 30 years prior. The most often cited reason for this was the sharp

increase in commercial fishermen during this period. In the first years of the Alaska commercial fishing industry, relatively few fishermen harvested large quantities of the fish. In the peak fishery period from 1934 to 1939 an average of 8,383 fishermen caught an average of 593,719,000 pounds of salmon annually, whereas for the period from 1963 to 1967 an average of 16,764 fishermen harvested an average of only 254,771,000 pounds annually (Gorelick, 1973). Salmon fisheries, comprised of five species (sockeye, pink, Coho, king, and chum) and thousands of “races” (corresponding to various streams and tributaries), were at particular risk of overfishing with fishermen easily taking too many spawning fish from a particular race and thereby damaging its future productive capacity. With the depletion of the fisheries reaching critical proportions, a solution for restoring biological equilibrium and providing economic support for those most dependent on the fishery was imperative. It was against this backdrop that the Alaska Limited Entry Act (Limited Entry) was born.

In 1973, Limited Entry was enacted in order to “promote the conservation and the sustained yield management of Alaska’s fishery resource and the economic health and stability of commercial fishing in Alaska by regulating and controlling entry into the commercial fisheries” (Alaska Stat. §16.43.010). The Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) is the regulatory body charged with the administration of the program and is tasked with identifying distressed fisheries, determining the maximum number of permits to be issued for each distressed fishery, and issuing permits to qualified applicants. Issuance of permits is based on a complex point system designed to assess the hardship the applicant would suffer if denied a permit, weighting such factors as past participation in the fishery, access to alternative employment, and investment in fishing vessels and gear. Once permits are issued, they must be renewed annually and failure to renew for a two-year period results in forfeiture.

Limited Entry essentially converted a common-held open access resource³⁴ (i.e. the fishery) to an individual property right (i.e. individual fishing permits). As property, fishing permits hold monetary value (women quoted current permit cost ranges from \$100,000 to \$300,000). More importantly, however, fishing permits are transferrable. While certain minimal statutory standards³⁵ must be met before a permit can be transferred, fishing permits can be sold with relative ease and with minimal (if any) involvement on behalf of CFEC. Permit sales are frequently advertised in various fishing industry journals, newsletters and local newspapers, as well as through permit brokers that can assist with financing arrangements, escrow accounts, and the completion of required paperwork. Indeed, Limited Entry facilitated the development of an active market replete with buyers and sellers of fishing permits.

Although Limited Entry was intentionally designed to help rural local fishermen acquire a permit, the qualification process eliminated approximately 30% of would-be eligible Bristol Bay Alaska Natives. According to Langdon (1980), the unfair denial of permits to Natives was largely rooted in cultural misunderstandings of Native communities. The application process did not conform to cultural norms in Bristol Bay, evidenced by a lengthy application process which required a person be able to understand complex paperwork in English (a second language for many people at the time). Because Native culture does not recognize a sense of urgency, combined with the fact that many residents did not believe they would be excluded permanently, many people did not apply at all for a permit (Pettersen & Bailey, 1983). The application required documentation of participation by showing fishing licenses for qualifying years. Many Natives either had not kept their licenses or had fished without licenses.

³⁴ Crutchfield and Pontecorvo (1969) argued that open access resources (which are not owned, and thus technically, cannot be classified as “property”) are vulnerable to exploitation under free access.

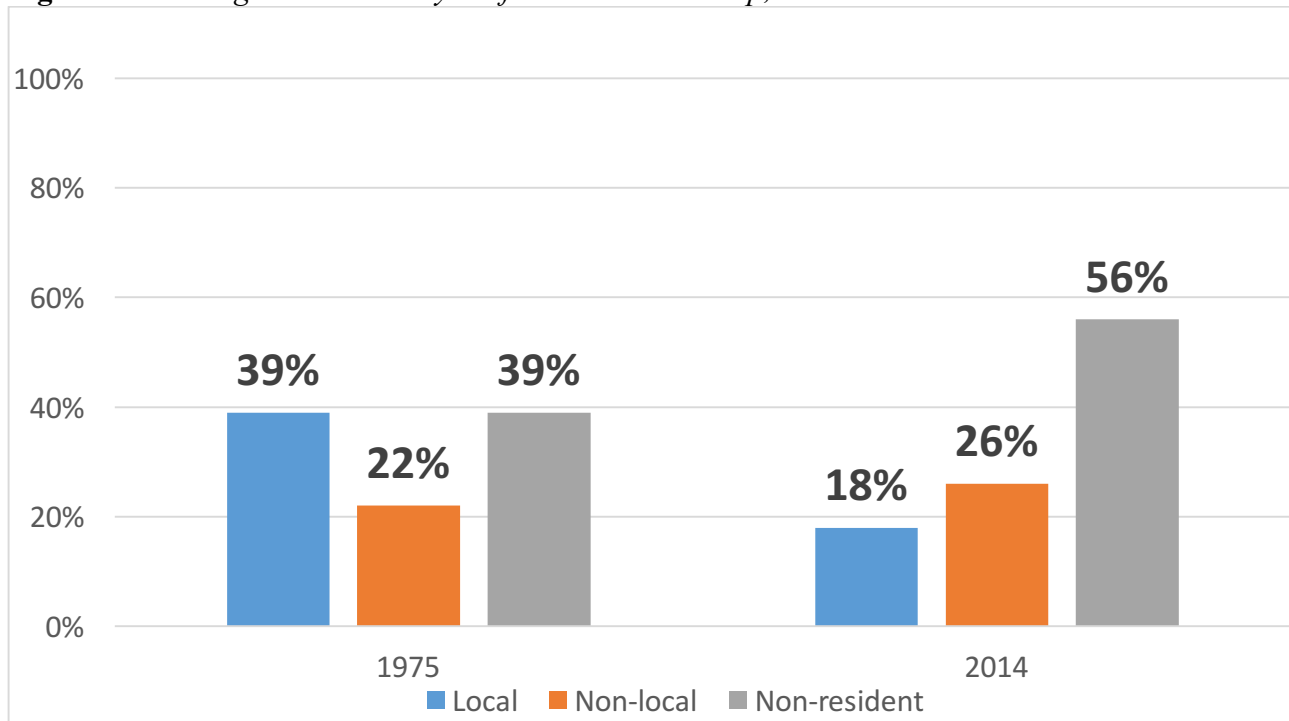
³⁵ For instance, a transferee must be qualified to receive the permit (e.g. physically capable of participating in the fishery, meeting minimum age requirements).

Graying of the Fleet: Decline in Local Economic Participation

Figure 5.1 displays the change in Bristol Bay permit ownership for local watershed residents (i.e. Bristol Bay locals), Alaska nonlocals (i.e. Alaska residents, but not residing in Bristol Bay) and nonresidents (i.e. out-of-state permit holders). The number of permits held by each resident type can change for three reasons: permits can be transferred to other resident types; permit holders can move from one locale to another (migration); or permits can be cancelled (such as when a permit holder does not pay a renewal fee for two consecutive years). In Bristol Bay, the number of locally owned permits has declined significantly since Limited Entry. In 1980, the population of Bristol Bay was 5,068 people and had grown to 7,020 people in 2010 (an increase of 38 percent). Since permits issuance began in Bristol Bay in 1975, local ownership of all permits in the watershed has steadfastly declined. In 1975, there were a total of 2,916 Bristol Bay Salmon Permits issued, including 1,875 drift gillnet and 1,041 set gillnet permits.³⁶ Of these, 38 percent of drift gillnet permits and 63.5 percent of set gillnet permits were under local watershed ownership. By end-of-year 2014, local ownership of drift and set permits declined to an all-time low of 349 and 337 permits, respectively. In other words, since Limited Entry, almost half of the permits originally issued to Bristol Bay watershed residents left the region. This averages out to approximately 23 permits lost per year since 1975 (Gho, 2015). Brenda and Claire emphasized that local native participation in the fishery used to be over 50 percent, whereas today, less than 10 percent of the fishery composition is Native. “This is no longer a Bristol Bay Fishery; it’s an outsider’s fishery,” Brenda said.

³⁶ Drift permits are needed to fish from a vessel, whereas the set net permit only provides for fishing from the beach shore.

Figure 5.1: *Change in Bristol Bay Drift Permit Ownership, 1975-2014*



Because of permit transfers/sales, as well as permit leaving Bristol Bay as a result of migration, the decline of young rural fishermen in the region is particularly pronounced, with the average age of those continuing to fish in Bristol Bay rising by almost a decade. According to Holen (2014), today it is difficult for the younger generation, if they are not connected to the right kinship network in the community, to raise the necessary capital to buy a permit and finance the gear to participate in the commercial fishery. Brenda insisted that the rise in the price of oil, along with the increasing decreased capacity of the Native community to improve fishing operations, has placed the Native people of Bristol Bay (especially the villagers) at an extreme disadvantage:

The price of oil stated going up, price of gas...there was an economic value being put on the permit and a lot of people in the villages just couldn't compete with the people with the bigger boats. The value of the permits went up to 200,000 dollars apiece. And so they stated selling them, because that was a lot of money.

Brenda's explanation shows that while permit ownership is a necessary condition to fishery participation, it is not necessarily sufficient. Though having a permit provides access to the fishery, the local watershed residents generally have inferior drift operations compared to outside fishermen. Generally, vessels owned by local permit holders are older, have less horsepower, are smaller in terms of gross tonnage, have less fuel capacity, and have inferior capabilities for chilling fish. Each of these vessel characteristics has a profound effect on both the size of local catches, as well as ex-vessel valuation. For instance, most Bristol Bay vessels do not have sufficient ice systems needed to chill the thousands of fish that can be caught in a single day, thereby lowering the quality of fish caught at periods of high volume (Hilborn, 2007). Tina has observed the significant gap between the supply of vessel repair operations and the extensive and ubiquitous demand for boat repair services, noting "so many people have problems on their boats and its expensive and you can't ever find a decent diesel mechanic, so people lose out on a lot of fishing and money waiting for their boats to get fixed." Inferior fishing operations have indeed exacerbated the differences in ex-vessel prices received by local fishermen compared to outside fishermen. In 2014, the average gross earnings per permit for local watershed residents was \$66,030, compared to \$113,618 per non-resident permit (Gho, 2015). These issues are critical for understanding the decline in Native participation in the fishery. According to Ginny, being the captain of your own boat is the pinnacle of success for the Native people of Eastwind Bay. She attributes the decline in local permit ownership, and participation in fishing more broadly, to a catch-22 situation that many Natives find themselves: Fishing for other locals on a crew would mean one hasn't succeeded on one's own; fishing for outsiders would indicate an admission of failure to himself and others that he can't secure a permit. The confluence of local and outside worlds, in a sense, sets an inescapable trap for Native men wishing to enter the fishery. A former

senior manager of the Bristol Bay Native Association summarized the insidious cumulative effect of Limited Entry:

What happened in Bristol Bay was that in the middle of the night, most of the young peoples' dreams got stolen. All the young kids in high school wanted to be a fisherman. The price of fish may have gone up or down, but the price of a boat and a limited entry permit kept going up. How is a young kid of 20 going to get the money for a \$200K boat and a \$150K permit?

While many women noted that Bristol Bay has become an outsider's fishery and that the younger generation's investment in fishing is not what it used to be, this cannot solely be explained by the economic failure of Limited Entry (Hilborn, 2006). In addition to the economic and cultural metamorphoses of the Bristol Bay fishing complex, the concurrent political incorporation of indigenous peoples into Western economic practices and structures during this period likely also factors into this complex equation.

CORPORATIONS OR COOPERATION? LEGACIES OF THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

On December 18, 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was enacted primarily as a result of the commercial oil industry's desire to construct a pipeline from the north slope of Alaska to the southern port of Valdez (Anders 1989; Jones 2010). This pipeline was critical to the commercial development of these newly found oil and gas reserves. Since the planned oil pipeline route crossed land claimed by various indigenous groups, a comprehensive land settlement was necessary before economic development could commence.

Unlike claim extinguishment legislation in the Lower 48, ANCSA did not corral Natives onto reservations. Instead, ANCSA dictated that corporations be created under Alaska state law, which were intended as mechanisms through which distribution of land and monetary benefits to Alaska Natives could be made. ANCSA permitted the conveyance of 44 million acres of land to the corporations, along with cash payments of almost one billion dollars, in exchange for

extinguishing aboriginal land claims in Alaska. Twelve for-profit regional corporations were established and representative of various geographic regions of the state, insofar that Alaska Natives in that region shared a common heritage and common interests. For instance, the Bristol Bay Native Corporation serves the Bristol Bay region, Sealaska Corporation serves the entire southeast panhandle of the state, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation serves the North Slope Borough, and so on. In addition to the 12 Alaska regional corporations, approximately 220 village corporations were also created. Alaska Natives who are enrolled with their village corporation received 100 shares of stock, which cannot be sold and is only transferrable via inheritance. Several villages have established settlement trusts or permanent fund to manage money, the goal being to provide distributions in perpetuity. Under ANCSA, Alaska Native peoples no longer co-owned Alaska's land with the federal government, but became shareholders of their respective corporations, basing land ownership on the corporate model. The corporate approach was selected on the belief that it would afford a greater degree of Native self-control than governmental administration by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, whom Alaska Native leadership viewed as dangerous and ineffective (Anders, 1989).

Corporations were created to not only settle land claims, but also provide a means for indigenous people to begin walking in two worlds—to maintain a sense of cultural autonomy and pride, whilst enhancing economic development and opportunity. Though Native people were empowered with substantial amounts of land and money for the first time in United States history, benefits to the Alaska Native people were not determined solely by the pursuit of profit-driven objectives, but also the successful integration of Native traditional values within the imposed corporate organizational framework. However, the introduction of a distinctly Western form of economic governance brought major changes to the material conditions driving Native

culture. Unlike conventional American businesses, Native corporations were not born out of successful innovation and creativity; but instead, as a result of government action. Hanrahan and Gruenstein (1977) observed that Native corporate entities left the important decision-making power in the hands of a few corporate leaders. Village corporations, in particular, began with minimum entrepreneurial experience and frequently had to draw upon non-Native professionals to establish standard operating procedures and shape organizational goals and identity (Anders & Anders, 1986). As Sacks (1995) observed, “although it provides Natives with a form of control over their future, ANCSA abandons remote rural communities to the corporate boardroom with little training, and often at the expense of their historically chosen lifestyle” (p. 263). Though rural Alaskan communities were certainly characterized as mixed economies prior to ANCSA, Alaska Natives’ shotgun initiation into Western capitalist practices certainly amplified the extent to which cash systems dominated rural economies. Whereas cash incomes were historically used by families to own and operate equipment (e.g. snow machines, boats, nets, smokehouses, etc.) that enabled them to participate in traditional fishing and hunting activities for local, noncommercial purposes, ANCSA’s corporate structure rewards and prioritizes the development of land resources, building corporate portfolios and trusts, and undercutting the choice to continue with traditional ways. The corporate form, with its value system that promotes individualism, wealth accumulation, and the survival-of-the-fittest mentality, was viewed as a solution that would improve the chances that Alaska would eventually become “just another state in the Union” (Jones, 2010, p. 228).

As women reflected on the ways that their respective communities have changed from year-to-year, decade-to-decade, and generation-to-generation, it was clear that capitalist values of individuation, private property, and wealth accumulation have increasingly assumed

dominance within modern Native culture and communities, much to the chagrin of most women. Tamara lamented the dramatic shift in Yup'ik cultural values since her childhood years in Dillingham. After detailing the strong community embrace of Native values and traditions during her formative years, Tamara presented a somewhat skeptical view that these values continue to persist today. In situating the shift from traditional values, Tamara insists that modern Western economic systems and practices are largely implicated in this change:

I think it's because of just the change in society and the change in bringing in a lot of Western culture and technology and jobs. You don't need to live off the land anymore; you need to go to sit down at work from 8 to 5 to get that paycheck to go buy that food, instead of going out with your family to collect that food as you would back in the day. Back in the day, you'd walk with your entire family, be exposed to your entire family, help each other pick berries, help each other pick the net, this and that. Nowadays, it's different. Nowadays, instead of going out and doing that type of bonding with them, you're getting in a car, going from 8 to 5, screaming at the kids because they don't have your dinner cooked. It's just all changed. It's pulled away from its original way.

Terry also observes the systematic deterioration of Native culture and values, particularly with today's generation. She pins the growing preoccupation over wealth and materialism as a primary source of delinquency and aggression in children:

Our kids—I look at their behavior now. I watch my kid's generation deteriorating in terms of discipline because we're all worried about how much money we make, if our kids are fed and clothed right so they don't get teased—all the values I was taught have been lost a lot.

In this section, I focus on how the accelerating shift to capitalist values has undercut traditional indigenous beliefs, practices, and codes of ethic, impacting multiple layers of influence, including peer relationships, families, organizations, and the community.

Individualism

Indigenous societies have been traditionally characterized as collectivist cultures, in which people are interdependent and interconnected with one another and are “other-focused”

(Beckstein, 2014, p. 1). As discussed in Chapter 4, the Native population of Bristol Bay certainly reflects a collectivist ideology, as evidenced by extended family kinship networks, collaborative subsistence partnerships, and a value system that emboldens togetherness, open communication, trust, and knowledge sharing. Though these attributes have not completely died off today, there was a great deal of evidence suggesting a shift from a society operating as a collective consciousness to one that has become increasingly individualized and self-focused. A fundamental concept in Alaska Native culture (especially Yup'ik culture) is the belief that to follow one's own mind is in direct opposition to the *qanruyutet* (roughly translated as "rules of living"). Yup'ik elders have referred to this mindset as "the other mind" (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, p. 47) that reflects one's personal wants and desires. Elders have forewarned that such mindsets yield negative consequences (from bad weather to poor subsistence harvests) not just for the other-minded individual, but also the entire village.

As noted earlier, regardless of women's respective ages, all were in agreement that the collective consciousness of the community has been abandoned in favor of a more compartmentalized, independent mindset. Violet, age 20, expressed a slight sense of trepidation as she commented on this shift:

What I remember growing up in Dillingham was everybody looked out for everybody. You walked into someone's house and immediately—"Are you hungry? Are you thirsty? There's food. Help yourself." People are becoming more individualized. People are getting their own voice, their own opinion. Before, everybody was a community. We all had a voice. We all spoke as one.

Brenda, over 30 years Violet's senior, echoed Violet's observations and concerns of a more individualistic community, emphasizing that Native values of togetherness and helping others are fading in her community:

I can remember a long time ago that our roads would be really muddy in the spring and the roads would get so bad. They would go really down. You couldn't

even see the top of your truck when you go into those muck holes. Sometimes they were so bad, a car couldn't go across so people would help each other. If you had a car on this side, we would wait for you on that side and take you home or bring you to work. People were more engaged with other people. Nowadays, it seems like everybody for their own. I really don't like that.

My own views and experiences on what constitutes and constructs "community" came into question during my conversations with Ginny, illustrating another cultural gap between myself and the women. Similar to my difficulty in understanding Marcy's family structure (Marcy coming from a complex extended family network and myself from an iconic Western nuclear family), my cultural biases once again entered into discussions about community. In the exchange below, Ginny presents her view on what community means to her, infusing the term with a somewhat pejorative meaning:

JEREMY: Growing up in Eastwind Bay, were you active in the community?

GINNY: What's a community?

JEREMY: Hmm. I guess I should have asked—what do you think a community is?

GINNY: I could say that a community is completely broken apart. It's more "I, I, I" instead of "we." There are times when the community works together, but that's only when there's a death or they're doing a search-and-rescue. That's when the community comes together, but other than that, it's more "I, I, I" and "me, me, me." Ugh! Oh my God, it's a total disaster.

Compartmentalizing Families

In Chapter 4, I discussed the collinearity between notions of community and family, particularly in village settings. This relationship, as women described it, was driven mostly by the density of extensive family kinship networks within rural settings, along with a rich cultural tradition that encourages togetherness, cooperation, sharing, and helping others. Just as women have observed the increasingly independent and self-reliant social dynamic of their respective community, similar shifts have been observed within and between family units. Reflecting on her

childhood in Dillingham, Brenda described how this change unfolded in her family. As she expounded upon her family tree from past to present, it was clear that Brenda's definition of family today aligns more with western family schemas:

I could remember when I was a child and it seemed like most of our family members, which included most of the community, I could remember Christmas time. My mom, she would get all us kids together and we'd be wrapping presents for DAYS. Because every family would get Christmas presents. But you know, the family structure, in my view, has changed over the years from being very broad to now it has closed up a lot. It seems like my family now consists of me and my husband, my two sons, and my grandchildren and my mom. And you know, back in them days, we all used to get together and my grandparents owned a restaurant here. Sometimes, we'd all go and have family dinners there. But I can't even remember the last time....I do remember. It was a family BBQ at my grandma's house. My grandma was still alive and my grandma has been dead for over 10 years. All of us tried to get together and we thought about having a get together for our family more often than that. But it seems like it's not the whole structure. It kind of is sad. We know who our relatives are but we don't get together that often anymore. Or, as a matter of fact, the Christmas presents shrunk down to just that family structure within our groups. And my mom still gives presents to like people she was friends with that I remember. We still go and help her wrap presents but it's not for days and days like it used to be.

Family breakdown is a phrase often used but rarely defined in cultural-specific contexts.

Images of arguing parents, messy divorces, substance-abusing family members, incarcerated relatives, or even the recent legalization of same-sex marriage (at least among conservative Christians) likely inform Western society's perception of what constitutes family breakdown.

Though women certainly acknowledged and identified with these elements of family breakdown, this abstract concept manifested itself in more subtle ways, too. The apparent narrowing of Brenda's defined family structure, which I refer to as the compartmentalized family, is a form of family breakdown that many women discussed. The shifting norms surrounding adoption and foster care of Native children are also symptomatic of the compartmentalized family. Many women recognized that these shifts are partially rooted in financial considerations and societal preoccupation with wealth.

Carrie commented on these changing norms, hinting at the insidious role the state has played in the management of Native child custody proceedings. Whereas Native values of family preservation, helping others, and togetherness were once the mortar that sealed the endogenous adoption of children (and thus allowing villages to maintain kinship and influence within villages), Carrie suspects that ulterior motives, namely money and government subsidies, factor largely into adoptions of Native children today. Though Carrie contemplates whether sexual abuse would have entered into her life had she been adopted out³⁷ of her village, she ponders whether she still would have been better off. In comparing herself with friends that were adopted out of the village, Carrie situates such arrangements as Pyrrhic victories at best:

I think my life would have been way different because I was going to be adopted out, but my mom told the doctor no—that she'd take care of me. My biological mom abused alcohol and drugs while carrying me and got mentally ill and the doctors asked my grandma—my mom—and she told them no. They were thinking I was going to be born brain-damaged, brain dead. Because my biological mom drank and abused pills and got mentally ill. Maybe in a different town, I wouldn't have gotten sexually assaulted. Maybe. But those other women—they talk about the same thing. About being adopted out and being in homes with parents that didn't care. There's a lot of different people out there—how they grew up. Some parents only want money and try to be something that they're not. They're about getting something that they want for their own selfishness.

Brenda also has observed financial considerations entering into adoption decisions in Bristol Bay. Unlike Carrie, Brenda presented a less pessimistic outlook on adoption proceedings that occur outside the family, emphasizing that today's heroin and alcohol addiction issues largely preclude Native children from growing up in healthy homes today:

Sometimes it's very rare that the adoptions go outside the family unit. Sometimes it has to happen because the parents are way too old. It all depends on how old the parents are, and you need more of a financial structure nowadays. There's more financial obligations nowadays, so that plays in a factor. And with our drugs and alcohol nowadays and our laws that OCS puts on people—yeah there's a change. I think OCS wants to see the family unit stay together, but sometimes the family

³⁷ “adopted out” was common parlance in referring to adoptions that occur when a Native child is placed in custody outside their own family, Tribe, or community.

unit has heroin problems, alcohol problems, that they can't even control themselves. So they can't just keep hanging onto these kids, so they had to start adopting these kids out. So there's a change, and it's for the better in some aspects. If the family don't want the children, a lot are being placed into homes of parents that want children. Sometimes it's not good, but that's kind of rare. If you place a Native child in a white family, the child starts...you know they never know their family traditions and customs. That can be a whole new story!

Debbie has experienced first-hand the trauma of her family being broken apart due to financial barriers. "I had a couple daughters that got into the drug scene in Dillingham and fought with them to get treatment," she said. "I kept Jason, my grandbaby, for six months so my daughter could get treatment." Debbie's fierce determination to keep her family intact, however, was not enough to overcome the financial pressures that subsumed her life. She explained how she ultimately succumbed to the financial hardships and struggles she experienced in desperately trying to care for her grandchild:

I could barely take care of him. Financially, I wasn't working; I had no income. I tried to get on public assistance; I went to BBNA and applied for that assistance program they had and I had to wait for months and months. Baby Jason had no diapers and I was running out of resources. I was hurting. I was in a world of hurt. I ended up giving him up to the state and that broke my heart. I was about to give up.

The issue of parents becoming increasingly detached and disinvested from their children lives was also of significant concern to several women. "The biggest challenge was doing things without the support of my parents," said Nancy on her childhood years. "The main value we had growing up was money because my dad would take it from us for drinking, so me and my brothers would do chores. We would babysit or clean up—anything to make money." Debbie recalled her experiences working in the village school system and dealing with lackluster parenting:

When I worked at the school, I was the Native cultural resource liaison and I did after-school activities, and it turned into "drop the kids off with Debbie and Debbie will keep them busy for a couple hours." And then I ended up having to

bring them home! They go to school all day, then come to my after school activities, and then mom doesn't even come get them. Maybe I wasn't so much like that when I was a mother, but now when I look back I'm forever telling my kids "make sure you go to their parent-teacher conferences; make sure you talk to them at home."

As mentioned in Chapter 4, many women framed child rearing as a shared responsibility within the village. In addition to one's biological parents, children master lessons, values, and cultural knowledge from grandparents, aunts and uncles, and myriad other extended relatives. Ginny has noted a shift in this communal practice in Eastwind Bay, implicating the disconnect between generations as the primary agitator:

I could tell you it takes a whole community to raise a child, but you don't see that anymore at all. You don't see it. Here and there you will. But it's not like that anymore. And the other challenge is the parents aren't.... it's like you could see a parent doesn't really care. They're too busy—"here's your phone. Go play a game."

There appeared to be a partial sense of responsibility or ownership amongst the women for the state of parenting and family unity in Bristol Bay. One interesting finding was that "owning up" to these problems was not an age-specific phenomenon. Brenda, a woman approaching 60, framed the lack of cultural participation and interest among today's Native youth as a product of the failure of her generation to inculcate these values and traditions:

And it seems like back when I was a younger child in high school, I was taught more on the traditional way: respect your elders, subsistence lifestyle, knowing where I came from, work hard and take care of the land, all that kind of stuff. It seems like, and I blame my generation—I was talking to a friend one day and I said "You know, it's really our fault." Parents my age. Because I haven't taught my children cultural, traditional way of life. Like my son, he's 30 years old. He goes out and he hunts, but I don't know if he respects elders. I make him. The traditional foods—I don't see him eat that much of the traditional foods. And my 14-year old—I see a big difference. He pays more attention to his friends and I tell him to respect his grandma. He just kind of rolls his eyes and stuff like that. So I see the traditions and cultures fading as the years go by.

Charlene, 21, explained that her grandmother continues to instill Native values and traditions within the family in an attempt to keep Native culture alive. “She wants all of us to start helping—learn how to do different things,” said Charlene. “They just want us to get back into it so we can pass it down.” Despite her grandmother’s efforts, Charlene believes her generation has failed to maintain the Native lifestyle, namely due to the intergenerational trauma of alcohol abuse and addiction. When I asked Charlene what her family values were growing up, she implicated this enduring community trauma in her own cultural displacement:

As far back as I can remember, my mom and dad were working. My dad was hunting. And alcohol. I know it’s not supposed to be a cultural thing, but I grew up with alcohol and drugs around, so everything died off. We stopped learning Yup’ik, we stopped doing Native crafts, getting food.

The Most Beautiful Place, but the Ugliest Community

Upon my arrival in Bristol Bay, I finally met Lisa in person at the local Bed & Breakfast that I had booked for my first site visit. At roughly a quarter past nine in the morning (still pitch black out and the sun not rising for at least another hour) we drove over to SAFE’s grounds. From there, Lisa provided a tour of the grounds, showing me the various wings of SAFE, minus the actual shelter space, which was off-limits to men. At the end of the tour, Lisa showed me the living room, which had been converted to a client intake office. This would be my workspace for the next six months. With a slew of interviews scheduled over the next four days, Lisa and I immediately began with preparations, which involved photocopying consent forms and interview questions, putting together incentive packages, and phoning interview participants to confirm their scheduled interview times.

Lisa also made sure to mention that she had developed a “traffic plan” for how participants would enter and exit the interview. For participants coming from town, the only way to enter the building was from the front entrance. “Just in case you have two interviews

scheduled back-to-back, we'll have the first woman exit through the side door down the hall," she instructed. "This way, we'll avoid the potential situation of two women running into each other."

"Oh right, to ensure confidentiality" I quickly replied, trying desperately to demonstrate that I'd been carefully considering research ethics and participant protection protocols.

"Well yeah. That, and just in case these two women happen to hate each other!" she replied with a tone of humor grounded in conviction. It didn't take long to recognize the truth behind Lisa's attempt to quell any potential skirmishes with women between whom there might have been an acrimonious history. During Marcy's interview, she routinely looked toward the door, worried that another woman who was also living at the shelter was eavesdropping. "She's a troublemaker, she's nosy," she told me. Similarly, Tamara refused to come to SAFE until she was assured that Violet would be nowhere in sight. As women discussed the social dynamics of their respective communities, it was clear that hostility, jealousy, and resentment ran rife in interpersonal relationships today. Terry explained that family loyalties and a survival-of-the-fittest mentality account for much of this dynamic in her community:

There's lots of elementary people in this town, like "if you do something to my family, I'll hate you forever!" And then there's people that say "that's their problem, not yours." A lot of that goes on here. I think it happens everywhere, but especially in small towns.

Alice echoed Terry's analysis, emphasizing that much of the inter-familial conflict in Angler Gulch stems from nepotism and favoritism:

There is a lot of fighting between families, especially in the village. Family against this family. Like people would choose their own family for jobs and just people picking on each other because of what family they were in even if they weren't like the rest of them.

Eva has observed similar tensions in her village, noting a multi-generational clash between the two prominent village families. When asked what spurred this contentious relationship within her village, Eva was at a loss for words, but positioned herself as trying to maintain neutrality in this high conflict zone:

There's a lot of conflict in Drifter Sound. I don't know what started it, but these two families—they've always hated each other. Drifter Sound is so beautiful. It's the most beautiful place ever. But they have the ugliest community. We have the ugliest community, I think. I don't know what it is. I don't get it. I really don't get why everyone is so mad at each other and get so mean to each other. I try to be neutral. I'm pretty cool with a lot of people in Eastwind Bay and Drifter Sound. Whenever people are having problems, I don't try to get involved because I don't need that in my life. There's always been so much drama. But I ask *why is this place so ugly, people-wise?*

Like Eva, Debbie also recognized hostile airs of the village, particularly the disconnect between the North and South Shore of the village. At the time of my fieldwork, the village was nearing completion of a two-lane bridge over the Wood River, along with approximately 2 miles of approach road on both shores. This bridge not only will connect the North and South Shores of the village, but will also provide the North Shore residents with direct road access to Dillingham³⁸. While Eva was optimistic that the bridge would strengthen the connection between both parts of the community, Debbie was more skeptical of the schism between both shores being resolved as a result of the new infrastructure. “I think when they put this bridge in, and even though they put a road there,” she said with certainty. “They’re just going to put ‘No Trespassing’ signs everywhere.”

Similar to Drifter Sound, Halibut Point is also physically, socially, and politically divided between North and South Shores. Tina explained how this divide in Halibut Point exacerbated tensions within her family during childhood:

³⁸ Because there is no road access from the North Shore to South Shore, Eva had to take a boat across Lake Drifter Sound to meet me at SAFE.

My mom's side doesn't get along with my dad's side. My mom is from North Shore; my dad is from South Shore. I don't know how many cousins I have, but my cousins on my dad's side always fight with my mom's side. I don't know about what. It was tough growing up because I love both sides. Seeing them fight wasn't really fun.

Classism

Discussion of modern individualistic ideologies and tensions among community members inevitably gave rise to discourses of classism, power imbalance, and social inequality in women's respective communities. Generally, women were astutely aware of the haves and the have nots, the weak and the powerful, the privileged and under-privileged. My dialogue with Terry illustrates concisely the breakdown of classes in the community:

TERRY: People really cliquy here. There's classes. Like the HUD³⁹ group—considered the ghetto. There's the A-listers that kind of control everything like the bar activities, the police activities, and the good job activities. Everyone has a certain class in this place. It's definitely the haves and the have-nots. I can see that clearly. And there's the favorites and the non-favorites.

JEREMY: What do the non-favorites look like?

TERRY: Maybe the kid of parents that aren't motivated to go out and get jobs. I think a lot of times the pressure is on with kids that don't have school teachers as parents, police officers as parents, somebody with a good job as parents. You can see that loud and clear. For instance, I got a DWI and I always feel like people need to have a reason to not hire you because they know what you've done. I really feel that here.

Terry's discussion of the classist social dynamics of modern Dillingham underscores several important themes. In situating the "favorites" and "non-favorites" of the community, Terry uses employment in predominantly white-collar managerial occupations as a litmus test for social viability. Her conceptualization of "good jobs" (e.g. teachers and police officers) is

³⁹ The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the low income-based housing assistance program nationwide. The Bristol Bay Housing Authority receives funding from HUD's Office of Native American Programs to provide "safe, decent and affordable housing opportunities for the Native population of Bristol Bay" (<http://www.bbha.org/index.htm>).

distinctly void of hunting/gathering activities, commercial fishing, and other traditional Native practices. Not only are the white-collar managerial jobs she enumerates typically occupied by non-Natives, but they frequently are held by outsiders/non-residents of Bristol Bay. Viewed under a capitalist rubric, I view Terry's differentiation of favorites and non-favorites as partial evidence of corporate structure and capitalist values superseding traditional Native values and customs.

Tamara also hinted at notions of favoritism and classism in the community as they applied to bullying and mistreatment of others. Similar to Terry, Tamara also discussed how social norms today are shaped on by power differentials:

I see a lot of bashing and I see a lot of people trying to be higher up than other people and labeling. And I see a lot of mistreatment. So say its ok to talk bad about these people and their drug addictions and stuff like that, but if somebody *up here* has a different last name and makes more money than these people, it's not ok to talk about their drug addictions and their problems. So I see a lot of that going on—labeling I guess it's called. Nobody has that “Let's help each other rather than put each other down” type behavior anymore.

Debbie also described longstanding class conflict and power imbalance within her village, specifically noting that job opportunities, decision-making, and community enhancement almost exclusive to one side of the community (i.e. the North Shore):

I was the only employee on the South Shore. All the jobs are taken by this one family. Even the city jobs—city and tribal—they had 42 jobs and I've been their only employee for a year. Everyone they hire is from that side. These people on the North Shore have purchased the property over here and they want to put a halfway house there to bring home sexual offenders from their side of the village. South Shore doesn't want it though. We don't want it there. And they're supposed to put a senior center there. They're supposed to build apartments there. And these people are the ones making all these plans and it's upsetting people on the South Shore.

Working Together

Traditionally, Yup'ik people ideally worked together in a manner that was based on consensus or agreement. Community leaders were carefully selected insofar that they lived in agreement with their peers, cooperating instead of trying to one-up or be better than them. Elders have forewarned that villages where citizens do not have the same mind are symptomatic of ignorance, alienation, and disinvestment. Being a village, therefore, requires the same dedication and collective consciousness that one would invest in their family. Not surprisingly, village leaders were traditionally those who refrained from gossip, cooperated with one another, and encouraged people to lead peaceful lives. Today, changing tides have brought about considerable change in community leadership and problem resolution.

Discussions of community challenges frequently evoked discourse of Native corporations and their inability to mobilize and effectively create solutions to community problems. Many women noted the relationship between various organizational entities as contentious ones, marked by hostility between Native shareholders and Tribal citizens, lack of cooperation, and irrational debates that usually end in stalemate.

In Drifter Sound, Eva (from the North Shore) and Debbie (from the South Shore) both pinned the lack of progress in the village on organizational dysfunction. Eva pointed to the irony of the situation, being that the various decision-making entities (i.e. the Tribe, the City Council, and the Village Corporation) should be working toward the same end:

I know from being on the city council, it's hard to get the community in working together. The tribe and the city—we're supposed to work together. But I feel in Drifter Sound, the Tribe and city have a strange relationship. Same with the corporation—all three entities don't get along like they should be. We're working for the same people. I just don't know why it's so disconnected.

According to Debbie, petty bickering and self-aggrandizing among community citizens accounts for much of the lack of progress in the village:

There are certain people in my village that don't want change and those that do. We're getting older, we're getting a new road put in, we're getting a new bridge put in. We need to be able to work together, but there's this one group of people who don't want people from town going past this road. I don't know how to explain it. I'm having the hardest time in Drifter Sound getting people involved just to come to a meeting. And when we did, it was a great big *Well he didn't go to college! Well I did!* I was having a nervous breakdown at that meeting I went to. I had to ask to be excused. I was having a panic attack.

Sandra, who works for the village council in her community, also echoed the highly petty and trivial squabbles that permeate her daily work life:

I tried to teach and tell people how to do the paperwork. Those people that are working—they aren't certified, they didn't go to school, they don't have experience. They just have high school diploma or GED. When you try and tell them, it gets turned around on me and they say I'm trying to be the boss. I get put down. I don't know what's going on, but he's [her abuser] getting my cousins to be against me.

Wellness is important aspect of health and human welfare in Native cultures, encompassing more than just the absence of disease, but incorporating the balance of one's body, mind, and environment into a holistic interconnectedness that promotes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing (Hodge & Nandy, 2011). Under the rubric of wellness, illness is viewed as a breach in healthy practices that maintain living in balance. A critical component of wellness is activities that protect, prevent and treat illness, which can include indigenous ceremonies, songs, dances, and natural medicines. To my surprise, some women discussed community resistance to bringing wellness to their respective communities. Sandra situated the resistance to wellness in Ironside as symptomatic of class struggle and oppression in the village, pinning the lack of progress in tribal programs to Seymour, a man of good family and power in the village (and also Sandra's current and Debbie's childhood abuser):

Lots of people still need help to this day. Seymour is the one that does not recognize wellness. We are trying to start a wellness program at Ironside and he don't want nothing to do with this because it will create problems. People will start talking. He had something to hide, that's why he never approved it. He won't

approve Tribal court either, because he's afraid people will start talking and get caught. Up to this day, nothing on Tribal Court or wellness.

Nancy also worked tirelessly to affect social change in Angler Gulch. After her husband's death, she worked on the village wellness committee to address the outbreak of adolescent drinking in the village. She also discussed the oppressive struggle in assuming a leadership position in her village as primarily fueled by gender politics. As Nancy began to marshal other village women to develop and fine-tune community planning goals, she described the backlash she experienced from the community:

The reason I didn't have any friends was because their husbands wouldn't let them talk to me because they said I was turning their wives against them. Because the wives started to say stuff. They were getting their own voices.

In addition, Nancy spent years working on the community comprehensive plan on behalf of the Tribe and the Village Corporation. Similar to her experience working on the wellness committee, Nancy encountered fierce resistance from the community, which she attributed to issues of power:

The City Council and the Native Corporation refused to sign the comprehensive plan, it was a power play. The day the village council refused to talk about the comprehensive plan, they said, "We don't have time, Nancy."⁴⁰

Ginny has observed that when it comes to financial matters, the village corporation in her village has made positive impacts, noting that the community does come together when there is a death in the family. For instance, the village corporation will assist with burial and funeral expenses when there is a death in the village. However, Ginny was critical of the corporation, as well as the Tribe, in resolving community issues. In particular, she expressed her frustration with

⁴⁰ In summer 2015, the village of Angler Gulch released its updated community comprehensive plan (the previous plan having been published in 2005). According to this plan, the Community Wellness Committee will be reactivated in order to restart family nights and resume prevention-intervention activities. As well, the village aims to work with the Traditional Council to ensure that Tribal Court becomes fully operational.

the lack of resolution on Eastwind Bay's drug and bootlegging problems, emphasizing (similar to Debbie) the petty bickering and quarreling:

The negative thing I could say is during the meetings, which I don't attend anymore, it makes no sense sometimes. For drugs and alcohol and also bullying—those are the things that have been brought up to our corporation. And they are supposed to come up with resolutions about how we're supposed to be helping with the situation. But in the meetings, there's more competition. Rather than to get to the bottom of the problem. And then they all just sweep it aside. One thing for alcohol, for bootleggers in the village, two people have been banned so far. I said "this is enough. I'm tired of all this complaining. Make an action. Do something about it. Quit complaining. What can you do? Do you need evidence that this is happening? What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for another death? Why not just ban those people?" And they were banned, they were from Dillingham. Ugh, I don't do meetings anymore. I become the bad guy sometimes.

Further evidence on the dwindling of collective consciousness in Bristol Bay also manifested itself in discussions of community planning and problem resolution. Eva, who works for the City Council in Drifter Sound, expressed her frustration with the Council, noting that the lack of interest and involvement in the community:

I kind of think the community isn't that connected anymore. They just come together when big things happen. I don't think the community members are as involved as they used to be. Even though I'm only 22, I can see that. It seems like the community loses interest when they're planning things that can benefit the community. I don't know how active they are. I just notice that the community isn't interested in planning things for the community until the last minute. Ginny bemoaned the similar reactive nature to social problems on the part of the Tribal

Council and Native Corporation in Eastwind Bay:

For instance, there was a death of a young girl two years ago and that got everybody's attention. We need to do something about our children and not wait for something to happen. I told them this during the meeting: "Are we going to have to wait for somebody to die to actually make it happen?" Especially now, the bullying. And kids drinking and doing drugs. That kind of opened the village's eyes when it comes to our children. But then they'll be there and all of a sudden, it seems like they get bored with it.

Sandra has observed the lack of progress in her village, attributing this lack of change to the apparent consolidation of power to non-residents:

All these years, the outsiders who control the money never did nothing. They never got us a new community building or new village office like they're supposed to. The outsiders do nothing. All they do is travel and have big per diems. Always traveling. Nothing gets done.

Native Othering

Despite the seemingly unified voice of Alaska Nativehood solidarity and the somewhat exchangeable/negotiable nature of ethnicity and culture among most of women, discourses of non-acceptance, discrimination, stereotyping, and even internalized oppression often emerged in discussions of Native identity.

Women identifying as part Native, part Caucasian often articulated their struggle for acceptance in the community. In many cases, women who identified as part-Caucasian described the challenge of being “neither fish nor fowl.” Alice, who qualified her father as “half-and-half” and her mother as “full,” described her identity struggle, stating:

You have to be better than them on one side, but also better than them on this side. It was pretty overbearing. I heard Natives talking about white people, and white people talking about Natives, and here I am in the middle...I felt like I had to take sides.

Tamara succinctly described how impact of her mixed ancestry ignited an identity crisis during her childhood years, eventually seeping into adulthood and leading to self-esteem and addiction issues:

Just having one parent that knew the Native culture lifestyle was pretty difficult. I was put down a lot by the Caucasians because I was Native and I was put down by the Natives because I was Caucasian. I guess with not fitting in with either culture, I grew up in a lot of shame. I carried a lot of shame, which led to a lot of low self-esteem, which caused a lot of bad decision-making, which eventually led to the addiction to alcohol to numb out the bad feelings of shame and low self-esteem.

Tamara personalized this seemingly abstract notion being a square peg in a round hole with contemporary examples that poignantly illustrate her ongoing struggles as a mixed-race

woman. First, she described the discrimination she encountered as a Native woman in Anchorage, juxtaposing this with another experience in which she appeared “whiter,” and thus, did not experience this discrimination:

Last month I went to Anchorage and I went to a nice hotel and I showed face and felt discriminated against. I showed up in the low-top Nikes, my Levis, I didn't have a ton of makeup on or carried my Coach purse or nothing. So they automatically put me down on the first floor with the partiers and the drunks. I was looking around and they were all Natives. So it hit something in me. I catch myself being overly-protective of the discrimination and the assuming and the labeling. I verified with the cab driver whose wife is head of the maids who stated that they do put the village drunks down on the first floor. And it brought me back to a memory where I shared with my husband—I called him and told him what was going on. They did it because I was dressed like this, because I came from Dillingham, showed a Dillingham ID, and I paid in cash. And the lady was very specific: *Any partying and we're keeping your security!* Just like that. I mean, who is she to assume? But I put up with that type of stuff all the time. I've had times when, say, I worked for SAFE—I flew in for meetings to stay at the Sheraton Hotel. I wore my high heels, I carried my black Coach purse, my leather jacket, did my hair up beautiful, had earrings and a shitload of makeup on, and they just treated me like I was first class. So I've had to put up with that type of treatment all my life. It's hard because you're caught in the middle.

Though Tamara stated on more than one occasion that she has only ever “claimed the Native side,” her narratives of race and culture suggest her self-determination has been consistently undermined.⁴¹ Tamara also described micro-aggressions she has experienced from her Native peers as a white woman:

People are shocked a lot of times. I can get off a small plane and go to Eastwind Bay to see my best friend and I'll be sitting on the couch playing video games or something and here comes four or five Natives walking in looking exactly like my mom. I'm sitting there all comfortable and they see me and they lock up.

Kina tauna? “Who's that?”

Kass'aq! “She's white!”

⁴¹ The lack of control in being able to properly self-identify has been shown to adversely affect one's mental health (Sanchez, 2010; Townsend, Markus & Bergsieker, 2009)

So they lock up automatically and then it isn't until I'm introduced and they say my mom's name in Yup'ik. Then they're like "Ohhh ok!" And then they're all comfortable. But yeah, all my life it's been that way.

While Alice and Tamara discussed their inner turmoil in coming to terms with their mixed heritage, other women, in fact, celebrated their multi-layered ancestry. In discussing various figures in her life, Debbie often clearly and explicitly differentiated between who was "full blooded Native" and who was a "half breed." A half-breed herself, Debbie prided herself on her Native Yup'ik roots insofar as they elevated her or had a positive impact on her. For instance, in discussing certain indigenous practices, including arts and crafts, beading, and subsistence, Debbie spoke with great pride of the Native people and did not differentiate between full-blooded versus half-breeds. However, when it came to personal, family, and community traumas and social ills, Debbie seemed to distance herself from her full-blooded Native brothers and sisters. For example, in discussing the need to teach children about sexual abuse at an early age, Debbie implied that the resistance to this squarely falls on full-blooded Native people:

Kids need to be taught that bad touch is wrong, and bad touch needs to be reinforced in the home. Parents, even grandparents, need to realize that. There's sick out there and I think it runs in full-blooded Native brains or something.

Debbie went on further to state that because of her violent experiences and trauma at the hands of Native men, she had decided long ago that she would never again consider romantic relationships with Native men. In reflecting on those experiences, she muses:

Ever since [my daughter's] dad, I wouldn't go out with a Native man ever in the rest of my life. I gave up on Native men, just because, to me, they're awful. They're mean. They're disrespectful. They treat their parents bad. They treat their children bad. I've seen it over and over—rape and molest their own kids, their own moms, their own relatives. And it just seems so acceptable. I got turned off by it.

Women not identifying as Yup'ik specifically also articulated experiences with discrimination and not fitting into dominant Yup'ik culture of Bristol Bay. Stereotyping and

discrimination among Alaska Natives from different regions was certainly evident. Terry was ridiculed by other Native children for having a darker skin tone compared to her fairer-skinned brothers. Tina, an Aleut woman, discussed her disdain for the judgment she hears passed between different Alaska Native cultural groups. “I don’t care about Yup’ik versus Aleut versus Athabascan/Native Americans,” she said. “These are my brothers and sisters. I hear people saying ‘Yup’iks are stupid.’ I get so angry. Who are you to say that? I hear Aleuts say that all the time. Who cares?” At 16, Nancy migrated to Bristol Bay from Southeast Alaska. Within her village, she described her struggle as an Indian woman living among the Yup’ik Eskimos. “I was accepted as a Native but they didn’t like it because I was an Indian,” she said. “They would tell my daughter, who was born in Dillingham, ‘you’re not from here. You’re not from this place. You’re an Indian.’”⁴² Nancy went on further to explain how her Native identity is further confounded as a “reformed Tlingit.” In addition to experiencing a degree of non-acceptance by the Yup’ik people of Bristol Bay, she also discussed the systematic progression of having been written off by her own:

I came up here and the people down there called me a reformed Tlingit. They won’t share Tlingit designs with me because I live up here. Even though I’m proud of who I am and where I live, they won’t share clan designs because they said I’ll give them to the Yup’ik people here. They won’t share stories with me because they said I’ll give them to the Yup’ik people here. They won’t share languages because they said I’ll give them to the Yup’ik people here. I’ve always stuck out like a sore thumb, but I’ve learned to become proud of it.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in Chapter 4, traditional values and practices bond the people of Bristol Bay in a way that fosters collective awareness, consciousness, and identity. In the early 1970s,

⁴² The Indian populations of Alaska’s southeast coast were traditionally known as fierce warriors and slave owners and traders, usually taking slaves as prisoners of war. Brenda and Nancy both attributed Yup’ik hostility toward Southeast Natives to the history of Yup’ik enslavement.

two state policies, aimed at preserving and empowering Native peoples and communities, created powerful rifts in Bristol Bay at multiple levels, including families, communities, organizations, and economic systems. Limited Entry and ANCSA, though very different in form and function, share a common thread of inspiring a capitalist ethos. Limited Entry signaled a shift in the local valuation of fishing from one based on non-monetary premiums, such as craft skill development, leadership qualities, and other non-material characteristics, to one that is more pre-occupied with monetary assets and “managing the bottom line.” Similarly, ANCSA, with the introduction of state-chartered corporations in rural villages, ushered indigenous people and communities into the corporate world, replacing agendas of cultural preservation with profitmaking mandates. This “capitalist conversion,” I believe, informs many of the changes that women have noted in their respective communities over the years. Whether discussing the dying off of collective consciousness in favor of a more individual or entrepreneurial mindset, the inability of communities to effectively work together toward solving problems, classist attitudes, strained relationships and discrimination, or decline in local economic participation, it was clear that all these issues shared a common thread of demonstrating an increasing movement toward Manifest Destiny.

This “capitalist conversion” does not consist of a blanket denial of or retreat from Native traditions. Such an interpretation supports the neo-colonial ideal, but not the complex reality of cultural change in Bristol Bay. That is, there is evidence that erosion of Native ways of life pre-dated the social and political experiments discussed in this chapter. Language loss and alcohol abuse and addiction are two examples of mechanisms that have facilitated that erosion prior to Limited Entry and ANCSA. However, special attention must be paid to these social and political experiments, for the contemporary challenges that they have spawned have, at a

minimum, exacerbated the more enduring problems in the community. For Tamara, the struggle to claim cultural and racial identity as a half-Native, half-Caucasian woman worsened her reliance on alcohol. According to Nancy and Ginny, the lack of youth engagement in fishing today has widened the generation gap, making the revival of Native language all but impossible in some families.

The economic and political transformations discussed in this chapter are not unique to Bristol Bay; Limited Entry Fishing and ANCSA were statewide decisions that permeate all geographic regions of Alaska. It is likely that the long-term effects of these changes have been witnessed in other parts of the state. I do not argue that violence, substance abuse, and other maladaptive behaviors are necessarily direct consequences of the political and economic transformations discussed in this chapter. The phenomenology of violence against women in Bristol Bay, which I introduce in Chapter 6, is constructed by a complex set of socio-cultural, economic, and political challenges embedded in women's families, communities, and culture. In Chapters 6 and 7, I detail this phenomenology, situating issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, and addiction as maladaptive responses to the myriad challenges and contexts discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 6: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

Prelude: Eva's Story

Me and two of my cousins—we were planning to drink this one weekend. We got two bottles and didn't have anywhere to go. One of them was texting Ned and asking what they were doing and if we could go over and drink there. So we went there and had a good time and everything. I don't know how long we were there, but a whole group of us decided to go four-wheeler riding down river. We went there and I don't know where the two cousins I originally went with were. We were just playing hide-and-seek down river and when I got back, those cousins were gone. I called them to see where they were and they said they went to town. They just left me there. I was like "why did you guys leave me?" "We couldn't find you so we just went to town." After that, it was like 5am or something and everyone started to go home to their own houses. I didn't have my own four-wheeler, so I kept asking people if they could bring me down. We were up the hill and I lived down the hill. Since it was summer and the bears were out, I wasn't about to walk home alone while I was still drunk. I kept asking who would bring me down and no one wanted to. That's when I started getting a bad feeling; whenever something bad is going to happen, I can feel it in my gut. I couldn't tell why I was feeling that way and it made me feel uncomfortable. I was getting really scared. After everybody left, I went outside to have a cigarette to calm down. I didn't feel safe anymore. When I went back inside, I sat on the couch and started to nod off—sobering up. I was really tired. My other cousin was on the other couch. When I saw him, I felt a little safer, but still had that bad feeling. And when I sat down, Ned came to sit by me. And I could never ever remember what he was saying to me. I don't remember. But I remember what I was saying back—"No. No I don't want to. You're my cousin—I don't want to." I kept saying things like that. I remember he kept asking me and kept saying "no, we're cousins." I remember falling asleep after that. I don't remember anything else.

I don't know how long it was since I fell asleep until I woke up, but I felt like somebody was moving me. I was still really tired, so I didn't think anything about it. I don't know how long it was, but the next time I felt like someone was waking me up. I freak out because I was just laying there and Ned was on top of me. I started freaking out really bad; my heart was racing. I was scared; I got really scared because he's bigger than me. I didn't know what to do and I prayed to God—"please help me." When I said Amen, that's when he got off and I saw the chance to get away. I knew I wouldn't be able to get away while he was still on top of me. I was scared he'd do something else to me. When I got up, he tried to pull me back to him, but I jerked really hard and pulled away. I went to go find my other cousin that was there with us, because he wasn't on the couch anymore and I found him laying in Ned's room on his bed and I tried to wake him up to tell him what happened. I was trying so hard to wake him up—hitting him, shaking him, saying his name as quiet as I could so Ned couldn't hear me. But he just wasn't waking up. I was freaking out; I didn't know what to do. I was scared and felt alone. I felt like something else was going to happen to me—like he was going to beat me up or something. But I couldn't wake up my other cousin. I didn't know what to do. I just waited for a while. I was too scared to do anything else, but then Ned came into the room 10 minutes later. That's when I knew I had to get away—get out of that house. So I went to get my shoes and I just ran. I was just running to my Gram's. I called Sasha and I was so mad at her, saying "Why did you leave me there alone?!" I was crying and I kept saying that—"why did you leave me there alone? You

shouldn't have left me!" Then I told her what happened and she started crying, too. She said "sorry! Sorry I left you!" I was walking home and it was like 8-something. I didn't know what to do, so I went to my Gram's maqii because I didn't want to go in yet; I knew I was still feeling a little bit drunk and she would be able to smell alcohol on my breath. Back then I was underage, so I couldn't go home smelling like booze and looking like I was crying. I didn't know what to do and I was scared. So I went into my Gram's maqii for a while, but I got cold and decided to go in even though it was still early. I just went in my room and cried myself to sleep.

Chapter 4 focused heavily on the construction of women's identities. For most women, identity exists as a complex web of connections and relationships to their physical, social, cultural, and spiritual environments. Women also articulated some of the enduring challenges (though not insurmountable) in maintaining personal and collective identity as a result of some longstanding conditions of village life that have compromised values and norms, including the disappearance of indigenous language and chronic alcoholism. As discussed in Chapter 5, the relatively recent shifts in the social, cultural, and political climate of Bristol Bay communities roughly coincided with two economic and political experiments (Williams, 2009) that permeated almost every aspect of Native life. Limited Entry fishing, through its imposed economic value on fishing permits, drastically altered rural economy through diminished local participation in the fishery. Likewise, ANCSA, through its imposed corporate structure and emphasis on capitalist values, influenced the political incorporation of Alaska state regions and villages. As most women described their communities, particularly their observations on how the community has changed from the relative past, a set cascading effects facilitated by these two experiments becomes evident. Cultural disaffection, strained relations, individuation, compartmentalized families, and structural inequality/classism were key shifts noted by all. As well, some women observed how some of the enduring challenges, ever-present in the community, have become particularly exacerbated in recent years.

As women reflected upon their experiences with violence, their addictions to alcohol and/or drugs, as well as the very frequent co-occurrence of violent victimization and alcohol abuse, I became convinced that these maladaptive behaviors and experiences were symptomatic of these deeply rooted structural, ideological, and cultural shifts that have occurred in Bristol Bay. In this chapter, I situate women's violent victimization experiences and substance abuse trajectories as further collateral consequences of the larger economic and political shifts facilitated by state-level policies and their trickle-down effects on rural Native villages. In essence, I argue that women's experiences with violence and substance abuse are social responses/reactions to both the contemporary challenges of Bristol Bay outlined in Chapter 5, as well as some of the more enduring, cross-generational struggles that have plagued the community.

MULTIPLICITIES OF ABUSE

I am unaware of the exact pooled number of victimizations experienced by each woman. Given that my conversations with women were focused on a number of topics (their experiences with violence just being one component), there was not enough time to go into detail about each and every incident of abuse. However, even if I had the ample time and energy to prod women into providing a comprehensive dossier on their victimization, this effort would likely still be futile, because most women likely would not have been able to render a reliable estimate. For some women, certain recollections of violence and trauma were clearly recalled and deeply engrained in memory, whereas others were hazy and vague. When alcohol was involved, this naturally increased the number of "fuzzy memories." For other women, their victimization history was so lengthy that they simply "lost count." Certainly some women's victimization histories weren't as extensive as others; some recounted their violent experiences as isolated

occurrences, others as more episodic yet still discrete events, and others as chronic trajectories with no definitive beginning or end.

In this section, I build the phenomenology of violence against the women of Bristol Bay, focusing both on early life and adult experiences. There are many important themes that construct this phenomenology, which I enumerate here. First, with a few rare exceptions, violence is portrayed as something of a cottage industry and almost always involves family members and close acquaintances. Given the density of acquaintanceship in the communities, as well as the fluid concept of “family” among the women, this is not surprising from a probability perspective. The odds of running into someone you *don't* know in these communities, especially during off-season, are remarkably low, if not zero. From a universalist perspective, research has also consistently shown that violence against women is overwhelmingly committed by people with whom women are intimate or at least acquainted. Bristol Bay is no exception. Second, the co-occurrence of violence and alcohol/substance abuse is quite pronounced. It's become common knowledge that alcohol is major risk factor contributing to violence. This is particularly true of crimes of sexual violence, with about 50% of such crimes involving alcohol use by the perpetrator, victim, or both (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996). In this study, it was rare that women provided accounts of rape and domestic violence that *did not* involve alcohol by anyone involved. Based on the number of incidents that women reported on (including childhood experiences), I estimate that the co-occurrence rate of alcohol use and violence to be approximately 95%.⁴³ Undoubtedly, such a high co-occurrence rate contributes to the stereotype of alcohol being the source of all indigenous peoples' trauma, in addition to the belief that

⁴³ *Lisa: In my experience, 95-99% of sex assault victims are intoxicated at the time of the assault. I recall one woman who was not and one woman who was sober enough to run to safety. In that case, a maintenance worker saw/heard the commotion, and pulled the attacker off of her. But, the rest were passed or blacked out or close to it.*

alcohol causes violence. Third, the ways in which women respond to crimes of violence are largely culturally-contingent. In Chapter 7, I will delve deeper into this issue, focusing on the careful cost-benefit analysis women perform in deciding whether they will disclose abusive episodes to family, law enforcement, or both. Many women have been advised by family members to avoid formal channels of social control in seeking resolution for victimization. For those women that have pursued formal allegations, many have noted that formal reporting and processing of their perpetrators has compromised their identity and sense of place in the community. In this chapter, I focus on the former two elements of this phenomenology. In Chapter 7, I will discuss women's engagement with informal and formal social controls in pursuit of justice for their victimization.

I Didn't Have a Childhood: Early Traumatic Experiences

Violence, substance abuse, neglect, and other social ills entered into lives of most women, in one form or another, at an early age. Even women characterizing their childhoods as “happy,” “beautiful,” or even “perfect,”⁴⁴ were subject to trauma of varying degrees (both first- and second-hand) throughout childhood and adolescence. By and large, these experiences were not isolated, one-time-only events; but rather, ongoing and recurrent. “I had grown up with so many miserable things,” said Marcy. “The trauma, the abuse. I didn't have a childhood.” As previous literature shows that the effects of early childhood abuse may also extend to other forms

⁴⁴ I am uncertain as to why women made claims of “happy,” “beautiful,” or “perfect” childhoods in light of some particularly harrowing experiences. The most palpable explanation, from a western medical model rubric, is that statements like these serve as a form of a defense mechanism (i.e. denial, minimization, etc.). However, I'm inclined to think that these statements may be active resistance strategies against the notion of victimization as a self-defining experience. Some women made it clear they did not wish to be seen as martyrs. It is also important to remember the collective consciousness that many women spoke of during their childhood. Perhaps in defining a “happy childhood,” women don't merely draw on their own personal experiences and relationships, but the collective whole of their families and communities.

of victimization and problems in adulthood⁴⁵, the myriad forms of abuse experienced during childhood and adolescence among the women must be addressed and understood.

About half the women discussed violent experiences during their childhood. The scope of violence ranged from witnessing parental domestic violence, experiencing physical abuse and neglect, and experiencing child sexual abuse. Six women discussed exposure to domestic violence in their families. For all these women, experiences were so frequent that individual episodes were not generally individually enumerated (with the exception of a few particularly graphic incidents discussed below), but rather discussed as part-and-parcel of childhood. “I have memories going back to when I was a baby,” said Alice. “Most of them were scary memories—violence, drinking, being scared. I don’t have too many happy memories. More violence than happiness.” Tamara also recalled the regularity of domestic violence between her mother and stepfather:

All I remember of when I’d visit my mom is the abuse—the abuse was just horrid. Every time I think back on my childhood and try to have memories of my mom, that’s all they are. And the only time she’d come to our home—the only time I’d see her was when she was all beat up and needed a place to get away from my stepdad at the time. So that’s all I ever knew.

“My mom was very abusive [growing up],” said Tina. “My dad was an alcoholic and he’s handicapped. She used to beat me and beat him up and she used to kick us out and then she’d try to grab me.” Tina largely attributed her mother’s violent behavior to issues of control, emphasizing repeatedly that “she took care of us; she loved us.” Tina further explained that she

⁴⁵ For example, a national study of violence against women in the United States found that women who were sexually abused before age 18 were twice as likely to be raped as adults, compared to women who were not abused as children (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). More recent research by Lehrer, Lehrer, Lehrer, and Oyarzún (2007) found that childhood abuse was the strongest predictor of sexual victimization since age 14. Among Native American and Alaska Native women, specifically, childhood maltreatment and alcohol abuse in the home have been strongly linked to both physical and sexual violence in adulthood (Yuan et al., 2006)

saw the same behavior in her grandmother (her mother's mother) as a means of maintaining family unity and structure:

Grandma on my mom's side was strict, just like my mom. Tries to keep the family together. Tries to keep structure. She has a very mean way of doing it. My grandma did it to my mom, my mom does it to me, and I slowly see myself doing that to my daughter. Controlling, to be honest.

Marcy and Debbie spoke at perhaps the greatest length on the traumatic exposure to violence during childhood, providing several detailed and intense examples. Marcy's parents divorced when she was eight years old, following an almost lethal episode when Marcy was living in Portage Creek. "He almost killed my mom," she began sullenly. "I remember we were going to school. She was laying on something, her face was wrapped up. She had gotten hit on the head with one of those cast iron frying pans. We almost lost her." Marcy also routinely witnessed violence against her sisters. In great detail, she described a time when she and her older sister harbored a relative fleeing her drunken and abusive husband:

We had this big [storage chest]—that's where we used to put our clothes. We took out all the clothes from that big thing and put her in and put the clothes on top. We all knew he was going to come. Sure enough, we put a two-by-four on the door. He broke that down too. He dugged around the beds, made sure she wasn't up in the bunk beds, hollering her name. We said "she's not here!" Boy, we almost smothered her trying to save her life. She couldn't breathe. She was sweating from not breathing.

Debbie routinely witnessed domestic violence between her grandparents. Given Debbie's glowing remarks on her grandfather's better qualities, it was shocking (to say the least) to hear this side of the man to whom Debbie attributed most of her cultural and personal awareness. She explained how merciless his battering against her grandmother was, even with her grandmother's impending death from cancer:

My grandpa used to get really mean to my grandma. He was just a mad man. Even when she started getting cancer in her stomach. I remember she would be hunched over crying in pain and he would come up and kick her as hard as he

could. He'd kick her completely off the porch. And my grandma would just lay there with her face in the sand.

As chronic the experiences of childhood trauma were to some women, about the same number of women qualified their childhoods as very stable and free from exposure to violence. Sandra repeatedly made mention to the fact that she was raised “with respect,” attributing these values to her violence-free upbringing. She was one of very few women (and certainly the only one among her generation of women, having grown up in the 1960s) to have had an open dialogue with her parents concerning sexual abuse:

They raised us kids good and how to respect others, respect the communities, respect the families. They would tell us it's not right if someone touches you—that I have to let them know. I was raised good. I never was introduced to be scared. I never saw violence. I never see verbal abuse or any of those things. On my dad's side, my mom's side—they weren't violent. Even my cousins—the guys—they never tried to mess around with you or try to sexually harass you or verbally abuse you. I wasn't raised like that.

As mentioned earlier, although Brenda observed quarreling and bickering between her parents, she mostly qualified these incidents as “petty” and non-consequential:

I thought I had a really good family life. My father, though, he was an alcoholic. It seems like my parents fought, but it's hard for me to remember. I remember one time my dad breaking every dish in the house. But I never did see him [physically] fight my mom. I never did feel like he abused us as kids. Me and my sister have talked several times and we consider our childhood to be pretty lucky. Because some of our cousins—holy moly—they got abused bad.

About three quarters of the women experienced sexual abuse, in some form, during childhood. These experiences ranged from having one's privacy invaded to inappropriate touching to child rape. In discussing their abusive histories, women showed an acute awareness of the continuum of sexually abusive behaviors, including offenses that are customarily viewed as “nuisance offenses.” For example, Marcy discussed a village voyeur who used to peek at her and her sisters while they were in the *maqii*. Terry recalled several incidents of being

overpowered by boys and being forced into submission. She explained the linear progression in the severity of these abusive episodes:

There were several incidents all the way from when I was very young. I recall being attacked when I was really young by a young boy when my brother was actually around and saying “Kiss her! Kiss her!” And I was screaming and crying. It was horrific and I was only 4 or 5. There was another incident where one of his friends fondled me. I was at a party one time and two brothers secluded me in a room and held me down and gave me hickies. They didn’t penetrate me. It was disgusting.

Debbie was raped numerous times as a child by Seymour, a child of one of the prominent village families, as well the man by whom Sandra is experiencing ongoing sexual harassment at her job in city services. Debbie holds memories of chronic victimization that date back to her grammar school days in her village. She explained Seymour’s modus operandi, emphasizing the calculated and predatory nature of his attacks against her and other girls (including one of his sisters) in the village:

My grandpa used to take me to school on the dog team, and some days he couldn’t pick me up, so we had to walk home. And there was a group of us—some of them were closer than others. I lived the furthest up—Francine and I and the Collingwood children—we lived up the furthest. They had this big brother who would wait for us on the path and he would grab us and literally pull down our pants and have sex with us in the old vehicles that were along the path. It was nasty; it was really gross. For years and years, I never told anyone I had sores around my private area. I thought I was the only one with that sore, but I went and told my friend Francine and she had the same sore. And then I told Linda, Seymour’s sister, and she had that sore. I think there’s a couple of other little girls but they haven’t fessed up yet because they’re his family members. Only Linda has told me.

Marcy also noted several sexually abusive encounters, all at the hands of relatives and people close to her. Marcy frequently described how those closest to her exploited her vulnerability at every turn. In one example, she described how one relative, who she viewed as a supportive friend, took advantage of her:

And this other time, I was going to go visit my relative friends—they live on the other side of the hill. I knew I was getting tired and he asked if I wanted to go on his back. I thought he was a friend—a supportive relative. But he wasn't. I tried getting down from his back. He would say "you're ok, you're ok." While I was on his back, he just started fondling me.

With the sole exception of Maddy, abusive situations during childhood or adolescence (whether witnessing parental domestic violence or experiencing direct abuse—sexual or physical) carried over into adulthood for most women. Women discussed becoming victims of spousal abuse, rape and sexual assault, or often both, in their adult years. As one would imagine, the horror and terror that subsumed women's lives cannot be overstated. Nancy explained how she lived in daily fear of her husband shortly after her marriage:

He began to assault me after we got married. The people didn't see it as an assault because he was my husband. But he would rape me to make me do what he wanted. It wasn't because he enjoyed it. He made me feel like dirt. That was one of the hardest times of my life—it was terrible. There was 11 kids in his family and his mom and dad never did anything to stop it. That went on during my whole time in New Stu. That went on until 3 weeks before my husband died. Many years and years. I was traded to his friends for drugs. He could be the most horrible person in the world. I could be sitting there and boom! Out of the blue, something gets thrown at me. I've been shout at, I've been left out in the wilderness, I've been traded to his friends. I was like a dog chained up to a tree that's just kicked all the time.

Similarly, Debbie described the graphic trauma she endured after her first marriage, emphasizing her husband's sense of entitlement and impunity fueled his abuse towards her:

He raped me when I brought [my daughter] home from the hospital. I was supposed to wait six weeks and heal, but not in his book. He made me get out of the boat and push the boat—I was 8 months pregnant—while he walked the boat from the inside with an oar when we got into some bad weather coming around a corner. I was never so scared in my life.

Tamara described a series of graphic incidents she had experienced with romantic partners while living in Anchorage:

When I went to Anchorage, I was in really bad relationships. *Really* bad. I was basically held hostage by one of my boyfriends. He was a Tlingit from Southeast.

I was new to Anchorage and he had a place and the abuse I endured with him was horrid. I left there one time in an ambulance; he broke my sternum and a couple of ribs were cracked, I couldn't see. Just the physical violence was horrid. And when he'd go to work, he'd take his phone with him and lock the door from the outside. I stayed and I stayed and he kept going to jail. I mean, he would punch me in public like at the bus depot in Anchorage. He punched me in the face in public. And the abuse I went through with him was horrid. He'd rape me a lot. Just traumatic. And I'd go from one boyfriend like that to another one that was worse. After I thought I was done with that long abusive relationship, I went out with a man that was paroled out of Hawaii State Prison. That was bad, too. He came at me with knives and his mom was in on the violence—it was just horrid. But I'd lived with domestic violence for so long—it was bad.

They are good people....when they're not drinking

As discussed in Chapter 4, witnessing parental/familial alcohol abuse and dependence was common among most women, most of whom acknowledged the ways in which early exposures to those behaviors contributed to their own alcohol addiction. According to many of the women, alcohol and violence went hand in hand in their families. In a true Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde nature, the behaviors of sobriety and intoxication were usually described as opposite ends of the pole. Sober, families were a source of strength, happiness, and pride. Drunkenness begat the complete destruction of these feelings. The pathos of alcohol-afflicted families was clear among all the women. Marcy recounted the effect alcohol had on her family members' behavior:

They were good people when they weren't drinking. And then my older brothers and sisters would always go to mom's or their cousins or their friends, and drink. They'd start out ok—laughing and all; next thing, fights go on. Materials go flying around. Guitar busting over somebody else's head. I used to couldn't wait for Easter lenting [when I was a child] to come because that's when they wouldn't drink for 40 days. I had really enjoyed it. We would go outdoors—outdoor activities, subsistence. As long as there was no liquor, no booze—it was good. A happy family.

In addition to witnessing countless incidents of domestic violence between her grandparents, Debbie also recounted numerous occasions of alcohol-fueled violence in her home

during childhood. In a particularly disturbing narrative, Debbie described a common ritual of one of her alcoholic uncles:

My uncles used to drink. Every single one of them drank. One uncle was really super scary because he would drink and would get really violent. He would pull out the shotgun and make us stand in a line and chase us around with the gun. He shot at me a couple times, but I was able to get away. I would run so fast to my friend's house in the middle of the night. It was so scary. And I remember my Aunt Ethel and I—we would hide under the bed. We spent a lot of time under the bed clutching onto each other, shaking like leaves. We witnessed a lot of violence and lots of scary stuff.

Tina also largely implicated alcohol use as the primary catalyst driving sexually abusive behavior in her village. Noting an inordinate ratio of men to women, Tina situates alcohol misuse and abuse as aggravating an already-intense competition that exists among the village male population:

There's a lot more men than women in our villages. When I go to a party, I'll often be the only girl surrounded by 10 guys. I get along with them pretty well. I see some of them get drunk and stupid. "I saw her first!" that kind of thing. I could see some of them are creepy, like "don't be alone with this person." I put my grounds up because I know what some men can be like when they're drinking. My best friend did it to one of the girls at school. I asked him what he was thinking and he said he didn't remember it. That's nothing he would ever do when he wasn't drinking. I've known him since we were children. He doesn't remember doing it. I visited him at jail and he said "Man I don't remember."

The vast majority of violent victimizations, particularly rapes and sexual assaults, involved alcohol or drugs. In many cases, alcohol and/or drugs were discussed as proximate factors related to the victimization, either on the woman's part, the perpetrator's part, or often both. Every single woman implicated alcoholism and substance abuse in sexual violence within their communities, and Alaska more generally. "Most of it...99.9 percent is because of drugs and alcohol," Marcy insisted. "If people didn't bring alcohol into the village, there would be no problem," predicted Carrie. "I think a lot of sexual violence that happens here is due to high rates of alcoholism. A lot of women get drugged at the bar here. DON'T LEAVE YOUR DRINK AT

THE BAR!” warned Violet. Sexual victimization narratives often conflated drinking and abuse.

Alice discussed how her most recent experience occurred in the midst of a lengthy drinking binge with her family:

The time I felt the most violated was the most recent, about a month ago. We had been drinking for so many days, really large amounts to where we would pass out, wake up and start drinking, then pass back out. And it was my aunt’s husband. They were sleeping in the bedroom and I was on the living room floor sleeping. After he thought I had fallen asleep –I was so drunk and I was half there I couldn’t do anything. So yeah, that happened.

Charlene’s most recent assault also coincided with a substantial drinking binge. Like Alice, Charlene also described how her impaired state affected her decision-making ability:

In March, I turned 21 last year. Hanging out with the wrong friends, I ended up drinking. After I turned 21, that’s where I was powerless. That’s when everything went down. I was on a binge for 18 days or more. Out of those days, I was sober for a couple days. But I just got used to it. I lost my place and moved house to house. And then me and a couple friends got kicked out of where we were staying. So we went to the boat harbor to use the bathroom. My friend was talking to this guy, he was also drinking, so he invited her, instead of me and my cousin, but she talked him into having all three of us there. So he said yeah and we called for a ride. We took him to the bank so he could get money and get another bottle. I talked to my cousin—told him to watch both me and my friend. I guess I had a feeling that the guy who invited us to drink was the type who messes around or touches—that kind of guy. I was in treatment with him before. Everything was good the night we first got there until my cousin had to go and help his captain before they went out fishing. I woke up the next day with him by me—my pants halfway down. I kicked him off of me and called one of my friends up and told him. I wanted to leave but I couldn’t just leave my friend there knowing what he had done to me. He would have done the same thing to her. So I went back and he was doing the same thing to her. So I woke her up. And he started freaking out. He told us to leave just because we caught him. So he kicked us out and we left some things there. We had to find her phone, we had to get our belongings. But he wouldn’t let us. He started fighting my friend so I kicked him. Everything got out of hand. He pulled out a gun. My friend didn’t even know, so I grabbed her and she got mad. I was like “He has a gun! We have to go here; we have to get behind something.”

Women also discussed how their addictions were not merely situational elements of their victimization, but also played an instrumental role. Brenda explained that her addiction to

alcohol often lead to situations of increased vulnerability and desperation as she tried to “find a fix.” She recalled a rape that occurred in Anchorage by a stranger:

I must have been 18, 19, or 20, because I was going to college in Anchorage. At that time, I was full blown alcoholic. I went back to the dorm, but for some reason I felt like I needed to go out and drink some more. So I started walking off the campus. A cab driver picked me up and ask where I was going and said “I don’t know.” He said “do you wanna hang out?” and I said “Sure.” I was drinking, but I remember what was going on. I needed more alcohol; that’s why I went back out in the first place. I remember stopping and him gassing up his cab, then we went to his apartment. I don’t even know why I went with him. We went to his apartment and he started this....stuff. Told me to take my clothes off. I said no. He said “You’d better take your clothes off.” I said “I need to go in the bedroom,” so I went into the bedroom and tried to shut the door really hard. But somehow, he got in. He got a hold of me and he raped me. I kept this silent for many, many, many years. I didn’t tell a soul, I didn’t tell my best friend, I didn’t tell my pastor, I didn’t tell anyone. I was still drunk and then after, he said that I could get dressed, so I got dressed. He looked at me and said “I’m very, very sorry.” And he gave me a knife and said “You should kill me.” I had the knife. I said “you’re crazy. This ain’t worth it.” I walked out the door and never saw that man again. I know it happened and the thing I knew most was holding that knife. Usually it’s someone you know, right? But this guy—I had no idea who he was. I don’t even remember him saying not to go to the police or anything. I suppose I could have had him arrested, but I never even thought that way. I don’t even know how I got back to my dorm that day. But yeah.

Tina entered into the world of vice in order to support her addiction to drugs and alcohol.

Like Brenda, she linked her powerlessness to drugs and alcohol to her own victimization by one of her Johns:

I was a hooker in Anchorage. I would get myself drunk and go make money for crack. I could have gotten an apartment. I just didn’t want a whole bunch of people living with me. And that would have been 800 dollars a month out of my pocket that wasn’t going to crack and alcohol. So, I needed the alcohol to get brave enough to sleep with these guys and I needed the crack because I was pretty much a crackhead. And this one guy picked me up and knocked me out with a gun, and raped me. And I went to the hospital for a couple weeks.

As powerful and convincing the discourse linking alcohol abuse to violence was, there were also frequent and equally salient narratives refuting this relationship. When I explained (and continue to explain) the type of research in which I’m engaged, be it to friends, family

members, co-workers, or even complete strangers, nine times out of ten, the very first explanation for violence in Native communities goes to the tune of: “You know, they drink a lot” or “it’s because of all the alcoholism in those villages.” In the spirit of full disclosure, I subscribed to the same logic. The research on alcoholism and violence has long pointed to the same conclusion: the abuse of alcohol has a direct impact on crime and criminal lifestyles for both men and women. Many women fervently subscribed to this notion. Some women, however, provided evidence to the contrary. As mentioned earlier, while Brenda observed quarreling and bickering between her alcoholic father and mother, she never witnessed or experienced violence in her home. Ginny spoke in similar terms on her non-violent father’s alcoholism:

My father is the most amazing man. We never knew he was a drunk. He never acted like a drunk. We didn’t know he was an alcoholic, because we never seen him drunk. All we knew was that he was a happy person. We never seen any violence. Never seen violence. Never heard him argue with my mom. There was a lot of alcoholism in my family...but he made sure to teach us about compassion and love and affection. Although we figured out he was drinking, he admitted it. He’s been sober for almost 30 years now.

Maddy also emphasized that while drinking went on in her home, violence never accompanied imbibing:

There was no domestic violence in our home or anything. Neither of my parents were alcoholic. They did drink, but it wasn’t—I guess I can remember one time waking up and hearing someone throwing up in the bathroom. They would, on occasion, drink to excess, but there was no fighting.

A Family Tradition

Earlier this year, I paid a visit to my primary physician for a routine checkup (it had been a number of years since I’d had one, and knew I was long overdue). I’m thankful to report that, overall, my physical health is quite decent, with one slight hiccup. Minor, really. After taking my blood pressure three times, switching back and forth between arms to make sure the reading was accurate, my doctor asked if I had always had high blood pressure. This was definitely news to

me. Until recently, my blood pressure always read within the “normal” range. That day, it was 147 over 101. My doctor ran through a list of questions. *How much do you exercise?* At a minimum, I try to walk about a mile and a half each day. *How’s your diet?* Excellent. I recently made the leap to buying organic produce. And, ever since living in Alaska, I’ve become somewhat of a connoisseur of salmon, halibut, cod, and king crab. *Are you eating too much salt?* Nope—at least no more or less than I ever had. *Do you smoke cigarettes?* Quit over nine years ago. *Do you have a family history of high blood pressure?* Bullseye.

Upon learning my father’s and grandfather’s history of hypertension, my doctor’s tone of concern shifted to one of clarity as she cited the boilerplate language on genes and heredity and their link to high blood pressure. As she worked through the medical logic in an attempt to make my situation seem more palpable, I realized that this was exactly how many women explained violence as an affliction that cut across several generations of their families. Almost mirroring the discourse on the blot of alcoholism across family lineage, statements such as “it runs in the family,” “it’s generational,” or “it’s always been like this in my family,” situated sexual violence as not only personal trauma, but also an issue of intergenerational health. It wasn’t necessarily that women evoked a biological or genetic basis of criminality that has transcended generations (although some certainly commented that this might be a possibility); the point is that, like my physician, women positioned their experiences with violence as expected or even inevitable simply because it’s already affected generations before them. Though there were a number of lifestyle choices that I had made to minimize the risk of developing hypertension, I was left with the impression that my family history overrode all of this. I couldn’t avoid it. Women framed their victimization in similar light, offering various explanations for the pervasiveness of the intergenerational transference. After discussing her own experiences of sexual assault, the

conversation shifted to Eva's mother, who had been victimized herself by Ned's grandfather.

Eva was perhaps the most convinced out of all the women that sexual abuse perpetration runs in families, emphasizing that the "covering up" of these incidents (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7) accounts much for families' inability to desist from these abusive trajectories:

It was a long time ago when they were kids. His grandpa was the Moravian preacher. During Sunday school, he would tell all the kids to take off all their clothes. He would take turns touching them in the church. I think it has become a pattern in [this] family. Even Ned's dad raped his own niece. That's why I said they don't try to deal with it—they just try to cover it up. If they didn't do that, they wouldn't have to deal with the embarrassment. If they took the time to teach their families—teach boys that it's not ok to rape and molest—if they just took the time to explain that to their kids, they wouldn't do that, I think. The younger generation is seeing that happen in the older generation. Kids are impressionable and they'll think that's ok because the family will cover it up for them. I don't know why they don't want to deal with it and make it better. That's three generations of rapists and molesters—how can they keep living with it? That's what I don't understand.

Debbie has observed a similar trend within her family, noting violence against women repeating across multiple generations:

I know my grandmother told me about her stuff she had to go through. And my mom is 80 and she's been through a lot. She has told me some really horrible stories. [She] has had a really hard time with sexual abuse. And being raised by her mother—my grandmother—and going through all that. And I know lots of stories and people that have done this to them, and it's still going on. And I see it in those same families from my mothers' generation to my generation.

Tamara built on Eva's and Debbie's observations of intergenerational victimization, insisting that perpetration and victimization are largely products of social learning and mimicking behaviors:

When we were in high school, the boys started getting rambunctious like what they were exposed to as children, like their dads. And these guys—you add 4-5 shots of whiskey in them and they're taking axes trying to chop stuff down, trying to pick fights with everyone and becoming all *dominant* and tough and aggressive. It's because that's how their dad is or was. The ladies started getting just like their moms. And you put them two together, you get a whole new mixture of a new generation. And it *is* generational.

Tamara personalized her analysis of Native boys and girls through an example of graphic violence she suffered during a relationship with her Native boyfriend:

I guess the abuse I got from him was what he saw in his family. He said there was times when his dad thought he killed his mom and made him help drag her body out to the trees. Stuff like that.

Some women with children have observed the insidious cycle of abuse (taking almost the same form and function) repeating with their own children. Such was the case with both Nancy and Debbie. In addition to discussing her mother's and grandmother's victimization, Debbie explained how the intersections of violence and addiction affected her children, as well. Recognizing early on the intergenerational patterns of abuse and addiction in her community, Debbie made the choice to move away from Alaska and down to Oregon to raise her daughters. In search of "the American dream," Debbie described how all her daughters fell into what Debbie referred to earlier as the "trap of rural Alaska" after moving back to Bristol Bay:

I took them away from here. I said "I'm not raising my kids in Alaska!" I moved to the lower 48 with all my kids, raising them in a nice home with a Daddy. We went to church, they got to go to Pathfinders and Adventure Club. We were really involved with the church. Cathy got to go on missionary trips, they went to private schools. And then I moved them back up here and they just went crazy. This whole place just took them away. And I lost them all to alcoholism and drugs. So sad. It just tears me apart inside. They got into relationships—Vera got pregnant and moved on to Clark's Point right out of high school. She was with her boyfriend for 10 years who was beating her for all those years. I had no idea; she kept it a secret from me. And then Angela—my poor Angela—my Uncle Johnny tried to do what he did to her, and she moved away and had two babies and then got into drugs really bad. And Sarah got into drugs really bad and she came out and moved in with me and Tom for a while, and then she moved on to her dad's while I came up here to fish and then she was back in the drug scene.

Brenda also described the influence of her daughter-in-law's drug addiction on her grandchildren, noting the commonality of domestic violence and sexual abuse:

My grandchildren have experienced a whole level of stuff. My oldest grandson watched their mama strangle her boyfriend. Their mother is in jail. They saw a lot of sexual stuff.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AS A RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL EXPLOITATION

The preceding discussion of violence against women in Bristol Bay makes clear that violence is primarily a family affair. This isn't entirely surprising, given the density of extended networks that define women's families and longevity of these families within Bristol Bay communities. The statistical odds, alone, of being assaulted by a non-family member are quite rare, particularly during off-season. This violence is also often accompanied by excessive use of alcohol and drugs, leading the majority of women to conclude that alcohol causes violence. In fact, there was not one woman who did not, in some way, make causal claims on the relationship between alcohol and violence. How could they not? Stories of horrific and traumatic experiences were almost always infused with alcohol-genic discourse. The form and function of alcohol's role varied from woman to woman. While some endorsed the notion of rape and sexual assault as behavioral consequences of alcohol use ("it lowers inhibitions," "it leads to bad-decision-making," etc.), others framed alcohol as a tool of control—a grooming mechanism with an instrumental purpose. Tamara, for instance, discussed how, as her alcoholism progressed, she began to observe that men wishing to take advantage of her plied her with spirits in effort to subdue her:

It would be "Oh it's all good! It's all good!" And I'd notice I'm slamming the whiskey and the guy is barely nipping it. I learned on my own from my own actions that he was probably just nipping it so he could take advantage of me.

If my goal was to understand how women relate alcohol consumption to violence, especially rape and sexual assault, this project would end here. But alcohol is a red herring. The graphic and chronic violence experienced by women reflects a set of phenomena much deeper

than alcohol use. Though alcohol misuse and abuse is certainly a proximate factor in many, if not most, narratives of victimization, I found that women's explanations and theories of violence transcend the ability of the alcohol-crime hypothesis to fully contextualize this problem. Rather, violence and alcohol form a collective set of maladaptive behaviors that stem from a complex set of socio-cultural, economic, and political challenges embedded in women's families, communities, and culture. Chapters 4 and 5 introduced these challenges in their primary effects of the people of Bristol Bay. In this section, I explain how interpersonal violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and other maladaptive behaviors constitute a set of *responses* to these challenges.

Limited Entry: A Biological Success and Economic Failure

As discussed in Chapter 5, many of the older women (i.e. those that were able to articulate the fishing industry pre- and post-Limited Entry) noted the proliferation of permit sales within their families and communities shortly after Limited Entry went into effect. Official statistics support women's claim of a marked decline in local permit ownership, as well as local participation in the fisheries. Women often tied experiences of violence, substance abuse and addiction, and general family breakdown to these economic shifts.

In discussing their childhood, most women in their 50s and beyond provided insights into how this transition affected their families, namely what happened *after* the sale of a commercial fishing permit. In Brenda's family, the drift permit had always been passed down to the next of kin. When her father passed away in 1978, Brenda's mother wanted to pass it on to her. Feeling that the man of the house should hold the fishing permit, Brenda insisted that the permit be passed to her younger adopted brother. Later in his adult year, her brother sold the permit.

"Why do you think he sold the permit?" I asked Brenda.

“My brother’s an alcoholic,” she flatly responded. A punctuated silence followed Brenda’s response, suggesting that she had revealed all that I needed to know on the matter. By this point, I had found that alcohol was usually the common denominator in any crisis facing women and their families.

“Was it for the money?”

Brenda reflected on the changes that occurred in the fishery and the ripple effect of Limited Entry within her family, revealing that permit sales transactions affected multiple members of her family. She emphasized that, much like the share system (where fishermen’s income is based on their share of the total catch), the sale of permits bred a false sense of economic prosperity in her family:

It was for the money. And he didn’t tell any of us—any of us family. Otherwise, we might have bought the permit from him just so we could keep it in the family. It was my dad’s. It had sentimental value. But, didn’t happen. I had a cousin—he had a permit and when he passed away, he gave it to his son. His son had it for a year, sold it, and he was broke within a year. No more permit, no nothing. Nothing to show for it. He acted like a big shot. He went into the stores and then a lot of people come and party.

In 1978, Nancy’s father-in-law sold his drift permit for \$18,000⁴⁶ in Angler Gulch. During this period, Nancy noticed a change in values in the village. Nancy had witnessed a similar “transition,” as she termed it, during her childhood in Southeast Alaska. When permit sales became commonplace during this period in Angler Gulch, Nancy sensed a change in the relationships between men and women, marked by patriarchal social norms and the struggle of men to maintain their sense of masculinity. Whereas traditional separation of Native men and women was based on a cooperative model which sought to optimize subsistence production (see Ager, 1980), the economic restructuring of the fishing industry in Bristol Bay shifted the

⁴⁶ The average nominal value of a S03T permit in 1978 was \$41,867 (https://www.cfec.state.ak.us/bit/X_S03T.htm)

meaning of gender roles, creating antagonistic relationships between men and women. Nancy articulated how this change personally resulted in violent backlash:

People started drinking and gambling and forgetting about their kids. And I saw it all over again. And it hurt all over again. I got a job and my husband didn't like it. His friends didn't like that. Because my friends would get jobs and they'd say I was making trouble. That's when I started getting beaten all the time. That's when I started having to do what I didn't want to do whenever he wanted it done. And I wasn't me anymore; I got lost for many years until he died.

Debbie also experienced violence as a result of the insidious influence of Limited Entry fishing permit sales. Shortly after Limited Entry came into effect, Debbie was able to secure a set net permit. Because her parents had licensed her to set net since the age of six, Debbie racked up enough points to qualify for a commercial fishing permit. Shortly after obtaining her permit, Debbie's boyfriend (the father of her first-born daughter) put a shotgun to her head, forcing her to transfer the permit to his name. Shortly after, he sold it, giving Debbie only \$1,000 of the net proceeds. Reflecting on this experience, Debbie recognized that this marked her avoidance and distaste for Native men. "To me, that was a big sign—never going out with Native boys anymore," she explained.

The fact that all the older women discussed commercial permit sales within their families, as well as articulated some of the consequences of those sales, is not coincidental. Limited Entry, in many ways, is quite representative of the exacerbation of capitalism and cash-economy in Bristol Bay. Although the transition from solely subsistence-based fisheries to those driven more by capitalism predates Limited Entry, the value on financial returns from fishing (compared to non-material values of hunting and fishing skills, leadership qualities, togetherness, and community engagement) has been especially noted post-Limited Entry (see Holen, 2014; Petterson & Bailey, 1983).

The rules and regulations that govern commercial fishing in Bristol Bay (and the rest of the

state) are heavily embedded in the consciousness of people that live there. Women often discussed how these regulations factored into how they were taught methods of subsistence living. “My grandma taught us how to make our own subsistence net--taught us how to make it up to regulation so we didn’t get fined,” said Violet. As mentioned earlier, many women depicted the Bristol Bay area as unbridled and lawless up until about the mid-1990s. Law and order generally were recognized in theory only, with minimal attention paid to issues of crime, disorder, and violence against women and children. Ginger described the collective legal consciousness of the community, noting that fishing rules and regulations largely shaped residents’ concept of legal awareness:

It was Party Time! No laws, anything goes. I mean, there were some things—we couldn’t kill each other, obviously. And you better not fucking cross that line when Fish & Game says “You can’t be past this line.” People took fishing violations very seriously.

Some women discussed ways in which Fish & Game policy and regulations have interfered with the ability to practice subsistence. Discussions on how one’s community has changed occasionally evoked comment or two on the restrictive nature of state policy governing subsistence practices. “We can’t subsist whenever we want to or need to,” Diane remarked despondently. “We have rules and limits.” In situating the present day to her formative years, the first aspect of change Tamara brought up was regulatory policy. “Everything was cultural, it seemed,” she explained. “It wasn’t like today where there’s restrictions.” Debbie explained how her own non-awareness of Fish & Game policy shaped a particularly graphic episode of family violence during her childhood:

I have made a mistake—every morning in first and second grade, we would have news time. That was one of my funnest times because kids would come with different things to share. I had the greatest thing to share—I was so proud. My uncle came home with a moose and my grandma and I stayed up all night cutting it up. We were going to have lots of moose and moose jerky. But the teachers

were white people; they were 7th Day Adventists. My first grade teacher's husband was a magistrate and so they came and took my Uncle away and took him to jail for getting a moose during closed season. I had no idea what closed season was or any of that stuff. After he got out of jail six months later, that's when he shot at me.

Debbie subsequently emphasized that times have changed and the people are becoming increasingly aware of subsistence rules and regulations. She identified pending legislation that will potentially affect her ability to subsist in other areas of her village—places where her family had practiced subsistence and gathered food for generations. When I asked Debbie to characterize the community reception to this growing body of restrictive policy, she simply replied “I think we've just gotten used to it.”⁴⁷

Between the laws that govern commercial fishing as well as general subsistence practices in Bristol Bay, engaging in these activities does not reap the same cultural premium or security for indigenous persons that they once did. Whereas the socio-cultural value of fisheries was once largely rooted in craft values of cooperation, leadership, and togetherness, consumerist values of wealth attainment and materialism have gradually dominated the enterprise. Local valuation on fishing, as women described it, has a very different meaning today, which has resulted in troubling responses from local residents, including interpersonal violence, addiction, gambling, and suicide.

Nancy likened the current situation in Angler Gulch to her own generation's experience in the boarding schools, noting some remarkable parallels in the manner in which Natives, particularly young men, respond to these socio-cultural shifts:

My generation was sent away to receive an education and they weren't at home learning how to provide and live off the land. They lost all the experience of living off the land when they went to school. They received different values at school and then they come back to the village and don't even know the channel of

⁴⁷ Alex-did I miss this person prior?: “Out here, you get in more trouble for shooting a moose than you do for beatin' on your old lady.”

the river. They don't know how to trap; they don't know how to hunt. They look towards alcohol and drugs to numb their pain at not being able to provide or make their parents proud. They are not proud of themselves. They're me when I left [Southeast]; I was very ashamed of who I was. And now we have elders' knowledge and values pushed aside. That's where alcohol and drugs came in. Now, they have heroin, marijuana, alcohol, pills. They smoke, they die. They're in jail. My son's age group in New Stu—all his hunting partners are either dead or in jail, due to hunting accidents or suicides. My oldest son doesn't go out to do subsistence anymore. The people up there are lost now.

In Eastwind Bay, Ginny has also observed a transformation in the socio-cultural valuation on both commercial and subsistence fishing among the younger generation. She insisted that the motivation to engage in fishing today is guided by materialism and consumerist mindsets. She implicates this transformation in the local drinking and illegal importation of liquor and illicit drugs into the village:

It's in their blood, but they're using it in a completely different way. Being blinded by the material things. The younger generation are doing it more for things they need, like snow machines and this and that, and the extra money goes straight to alcohol and drugs. It's being disrespected in so many ways.

A lot of strangers in town

In Chapter 4, I discussed alcohol abuse and dependence as an enduring challenge of the Bristol Bay region, with the situational elements of the fishing industry breeding an alcohol-genic environment primed for abuse. Beyond situational risk factors inherent in any fishing industry (long working hours, dangerous and life-threatening working conditions, and capricious fluctuation in fish prices), research has shown that extensive restructuring of the rural sector, which has further increased the temporary and contractual workforce in this sector, has also been linked to alcohol abuse in commercial fishing and farming sectors (Garnaut et al., 2001; Gray & Lawrence, 2001). More than any fishery throughout the state of Alaska, temporary and migrant workers saturate the Bristol Bay fishery year after year. Many women observed that alcohol and drug abuse, though persistent throughout the calendar year, are particularly intensified during

fishing season in Bristol Bay today, attributing the spike in abuse to the inundation of outside fishermen. “Over the summer, that’s when everyone comes fishing,” said Charlene. “A lot of weirdos.” Several women echoed Charlene’s blunt assessment. Tamara described the summer scene in Dillingham, noting that the influx of outsiders exacerbates the vulnerability of local women, particularly Native women, to substance abuse and interpersonal violence:

Lots of drinking. Every summer, that’s what happens. Growing up here, summer time was the best because that’s the time to party. There’d be beach parties. You could go down to the boat harbor and jump on any boat, and there’d be alcohol. There’s a lot of strangers in town who are purposely out looking to see what kind of ladies they can drink with. I’ve done a lot of that boat hopping and drinking on boats and partying in the canneries when there’s strangers in town. We partied wherever we could. A lot of dangerous situations. A lot of strangers. That’s just how it goes. A lot of newcomers in town. Everyone looking for a drink and good time. A lot of times you don’t know these people. Some of them are perpetrators. They’re coming in from Washington and California and all these strange places. And here you are—this small little mind, only grew up in a village or in Dillingham.

Claire’s detailed personal account of one of her own experiences with sexual assault illustrates one example of vulnerability during fishing season:

In 2012, I was blacked out with one of my friends. I had 10 shots of vodka. On the way to the bar, I was falling everywhere and wondering why the heck I was falling. Then I realized I was so drunk I couldn’t even walk! I didn’t drink that much ever until recently. I just couldn’t walk, so I stopped by my friend’s house and told her I needed help because I couldn’t make it to the bar. She’s like “you can’t come in here. You’re drinking.” And I was like ok, so I went to the police station and people down there said they were full. I said I needed to check myself in.⁴⁸ They said they were too full. I asked if one of the cops could give me a ride home, and they said “No. They’re all busy.” I picked up the phone and tried to call for a ride, but I couldn’t call because I couldn’t get the number straight. Oh, I was so loaded. I had a knife on me and I was like “ok I’ll just walk home with my knife.” By then, my friend was out looking for me with her mom. They went to

⁴⁸ Under Alaska Stat. § 47.37.170, local authorities are required to respond to people who are inebriated to the point that they cannot make rational decisions concerning their health and safety. In Dillingham, the police department will first try to take that person home. The next option, according to state law, is to take the inebriant to a detox facility. The next option is to take them to a medical facility (in this case, the Kakanak Hospital). The last resort (and also the most common one) is to allow inebriants to sleep it off in the town jail. Women collectively referred to this as “sleep off” Under this law, people in sleep-off are not formally placed under arrest, nor charged with any crime. They are simply housed for the next 12 hours or so until they are sober. However, given that the jail is only an eight bed facility with two hold rooms, it fills quickly.

the bar to see if I made it there and one of my friends there said “No, she never made it here, but I’ll help you look. They drove around looking for me and my friend said she saw me walking in to the boat yard with an out-of-towner. The next day, I went to the hospital for a SART exam. It was so painful and gross. They said it looked like someone ran barbed wire through me down there. I still have nightmares about being tossed around in a circle in the boatyard by fishermen that I didn’t know.

Tamara and Claire’s portrayal of “stranger danger” in the community during fishing season somewhat challenges the notion of sexual violence as primarily a family affair. Brenda partially acknowledged the link between the influx of outside fishermen and sexual violence against women in Bristol Bay. Similar to Tamara’s and Claire’s experiences of sexual violence during fishing season, Brenda also observes a spike of sexual victimization during the summer months. Unlike Tamara and Claire, however, Brenda maintains that violence in the community, even in the summertime, originates within the local population. Brenda implicates the seasonal infiltration of fishermen not as a direct cause of sexual violence against local women, but more of a contextual factor influencing the way local residents behave:

A lot of our violence is among people from here. I don’t recall any sexual violence among the fishermen—any that was reported, anyway. But there was something with one of the local guys. In the summertime, people get goofy here! Now, there are people everywhere. There’s always somebody walking on the bike path, there’s tons of people in town, lot of people trying to get their boats ready to go fishing, a lot of cannery workers. And a lot of them you don’t know anymore. The people that came up here prior to Limited Entry—my *uppa* would have called them the daegos—they’d come up here every single year and they’d fish and you knew who they were and they became like a summertime resident. But now, you don’t know anybody who comes up here.

So many damn drugs out there

Opioid addiction was frequently discussed as a top public safety and public health concern. Issues of crime, juvenile delinquency, family breakdown, and death were all linked to the spike in illicit substance abuse in Bristol Bay. When asked if their respective communities were safe places to live, many women were quick to point out how drugs have changed the

perceptions of safety. For example, when I asked Marcy if Dillingham was a safe community, she remarked, “not so much after so much drugs; so many damn drugs out there. Lately, it’s been death after death here.”

The issue of illicit drug use and addiction was brought to my attention within the first ten minutes of my first site visit to Dillingham. After landing at the Dillingham Airport, I was met by Mickey, the proprietor of the local bed and breakfast. On the drive back from the airport, he asked what brought me to Dillingham, noting that not too many outsiders come to town this time of year (it was mid-February at the time, well before outsiders begin to infiltrate the Bay for fishing season). By this point, I’d grown cautious over providing too much detail about my research project, having seen firsthand the highly controversial and political nature of the subject matter. “I’m studying violence in rural Alaskan communities. Trying to understand some of the root causes,” I said. Mickey chuckled. “Ahhh ok. Well, hopefully you can figure out what’s going on with the heroin trafficking here!” Admittedly, my own notions of drug trafficking communities (fueled largely by television news and blockbuster films), along with the limited body of rural sociology scholarship that implicates marijuana and methamphetamine as rural American’s “problem” drugs, were somewhat at odds with Mickey’s remarks. Having been caught off-guard, I replied with a half-hearted laugh. “No, I’m serious! That’s your silver bullet right there!” Mickey then went on to explain the extent of Dillingham’s heroin crisis, giving his opinions on how the problem began, why it’s so prevalent, and who it affects most. “It’s the worst with the Natives here,” he said.

The use of opioids, especially heroin and prescription pills, has been steadily rising in Dillingham and surrounding villages, according to the Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Team (WAANT). Three conditions have primed drug trafficking as a lucrative business in

Bristol Bay (and the rest of the rural Alaska, for that matter). First, the lack of drug interdiction efforts in rural Alaska affords drug traffickers almost unfettered distribution opportunities throughout the state. The commercial air travel experience from Anchorage to rural regions of the state is very different from what one would experience on most domestic flights in the Lower 48. The process involves no security screening, no pat-downs, and no questions about what is packed in your bag. You check in at the counter, provide your current weight, and walk onto the airport tarmac to board a small propeller plane. Alex, a former Dillingham police officer, described the ease with which hard drugs enter the community:

Somebody told me this morning that one of the guys got on PenAir and had a coat full of heroin when he came to Dillingham—walked right through and nobody screened him, no nothing, got off. I said “that sounds right! Sounds just right!” And so I know for sure it’s coming in on plane. Most everybody thinks it. Especially in the winter time, can’t get here by ship. It’s only gonna’ be here one way.

Once in Dillingham, hard drugs inevitably spread to the surrounding villages in the same manner. “It’s all over Bristol Bay,” said Nancy. “They bring it into the villages on the planes. They jump into the little planes and spread it.”

The second condition that has primed Bristol Bay as haven for drug trafficking is the high demand for opioids. Violet suspects that the sharp spike in the demand for opioids in the community stems from a dramatic shift in the way the hospital handled pain management. She explained that prior to 2010, the hospital was quite liberal in distributing opioid-based medication. “It was unbelievable how easy it was to go to the hospital and get pain medication,” she said. “You could completely fake an illness and get pain medication. They didn’t realize how much it was impacting everyone.” After the hospital changed its policies, those that were on pain medication long-term had to either wean off, or were cut off completely. With a significant portion of the community addicted to oxycodone, Vicodin, or methadone, many turned to heroin

and methamphetamine. Similarly, Terry pointed to the bemusing profile of heroin addicts in the community. “For some reason, this heroin epidemic stemmed from people wouldn’t ordinarily suspect, because of the pills—the OxyContin and the oxycodone—they can’t get them anymore,” she explained. “One drug leads to another.” Tina, an admitted alcoholic and substance abuser, similarly acknowledged the gateway theory of drug abuse and addiction among her circle of friends in her village:

Meth came into Halibut Point, then heroin. For the average family it’s pretty normal. They’re fine. But then there’s the druggies—that’s my classification—they still talk to us, but they don’t like us. I’ve been drinking and doing drugs for the past four years really strong. Drugs started coming in more and more and all of a sudden I found myself shooting up with my friends—something we never used to do. It would just be drinking. Then it turned into drinking and “oh try this cocaine.” That was the first one. Then cocaine was unpopular—meth became popular. Then all of sudden it was heroin. And then we’d be sitting there shooting up heroin. Like what the fuck were we doing?

Finally, the drug trade in Bristol Bay thrives because, from an economic perspective, it offers an astronomical return-on-investment. Like the price of most goods and services in rural Alaska, the more isolated the community, the higher the price. Drugs are no exception. Whereas a half-gram dose of heroin may have a street value in the ballpark of 10 dollars in some neighborhoods of my Los Angeles community, a one-*tenth* gram of the same cut and quality in Dillingham averages 100 to 200 dollars (Bendinger, 2014). Over breakfast one morning at the B&B, Mickey half-jokingly remarked “there’s two ways to strike it rich here in Dillingham: become a captain of your own fishing crew or become a drug kingpin.”

Many women have attributed the spike in drug activity in the Bristol Bay region to the influx of seasonal workers and fishermen who have access to dealers in the Lower 48. “There’s all sorts of stuff that creeps in here,” said Terry. “Now there’s meth out there, there’s heroin out

there. There's bath salts." In Eastwind Bay, Eva believes the increase in heroin and other hard drugs are the primary result of cannery workers importing during fishing season:

It's becoming a lot more crazy there than when I was a kid. It's always been a dry community. No alcohol. But now, I guess there's big drugs going there now and a lot of people are doing pills. I know that especially in the summer when the fishery is open over there, the people they were bringing in were bringing in hard drugs.

Violet has observed similar trends in Dillingham. "Fishing time. That's when all these people come from out of town with this heroin or meth," she said. "One tenth of a gram of heroin is 100 to 200 bucks. That's one hit. In Anchorage, it's 8 to 10 bucks a hit."

Like alcohol, women occasionally implicated heroin addiction as a primary catalyst of violence in their communities and their own lives. Alice has observed the systematic deterioration of the lives of those close to her as a result of heroin addiction. "It is actually very scary because most of the people who I know are getting into heroin and there's a lot more violence happening because of that," she said. In describing a series of horrific experiences with one of her abusive boyfriends, Tamara's explanation for violence was largely rooted in pharmacological explanations:

I didn't realize it at the time, but he was a heroin baby so that part of his brain from right and wrong wouldn't function right. He was constantly in and out of jail.

Violence was not the only consequence linked to the Bristol Bay heroin epidemic. The breakdown of families was also frequently brought up by a number of women. In Chapter 5, issues of addiction were implicated in the progressive "narrowing" of the traditional Native family. Brenda's and Debbie's discussion of the contemporary heroin addiction issues and their effect on families and communities in Bristol Bay adds another complex layer to understanding the shift in Native family structure. In many ways, women described the impact of heroin

addiction within communities in the same manner that I would expect indigenous peoples to have described the Great Flu epidemic of the 1800s or the boarding school tragedies of mid-20th century; the common thread across all these tragedies being the complete disintegration of Native families. According to many women, the Native family stronghold has not been able to withstand the unforgiving trauma of drug abuse. Violet explained the domino effect that heroin addiction has played in the proliferation of child welfare cases in Bristol Bay, attributing heroin and drug addiction to the breakdown of families and the general decline in traditional values:

Sure enough, once they couldn't get the pain medication through their doctor, they would buy it off their friends for \$250 a pill. That's how much one pill in this community costs: 250 dollars for a 30-minute high. Some people would buy 8-10 a day. That's food out of children's mouths, money out of kid's education—you just watched families completely crumble. All the kids are suffering. OCS is taking these kids and trying to place them. We ran out of foster homes for all these kids and having to send them to Anchorage. I've watched how many families just get completely torn apart. Parents have no remorse for their actions. Or even the kids that do it, you know? Stealing from other people, stealing from elders. I never grew up with drugs, just alcohol. It's just different.

The difference that Violet observes in heroin addiction vis-à-vis alcohol addiction is an important one. Though alcoholism has certainly been an enormous source of trauma and strain among Native families (both historically and today), there is much evidence that suggests a uniqueness to the heroin epidemic. Brenda commented on how increasing self-reliance and independence in the community have served as a major barrier to addressing and treating heroin addiction. "It seems like back then with the alcohol issues...it seems like we reached out for help," she said. "With addiction nowadays, they're not reaching out for help. We have to reach out to them."

There is little doubt that alcohol and illicit drug addiction have play a significant part in patterning the abuse in many women's lives. Given that addiction is commonly known as a "family disease," it is not all surprising to hear of alcohol and drug addiction's deleterious effects

on women's family relationships, especially with children. As women described these impacts, there were some clear indications of feedback effects whereby the effects of alcohol and/or drug abuse on women's families worsened their addiction, as well as lead to additional maladaptive responses. About two years ago, Alice's children were taken by OCS when she left them home alone one afternoon to make a liquor store run. Since then, Alice explained that she's carried an immense amount of guilt and shame, which has exacerbated her use of alcohol. She described her relationship with her son, who currently resides in Dillingham with her ex-husband's brother, as particularly strained, simply stating "he's pretty angry at me because of everything." Last winter, she attempted suicide.

Similarly, Tina explained how her addiction to alcohol and drugs have compromised her attachment to her daughter:

I left my daughter at the hospital when she was born. I was drinking and using drugs every single day that my daughter was in my stomach. I left her at the hospital and my parents went and got her and ended up adopting her. She knows I'm her mom, she calls me mom, she always wants me to be with her, she always wants me home. I keep leaving and breaking this little girl's heart. And another thing—I'm finally starting to sober up and I want to and I find out I'm sick and dying⁴⁹, so I'm just going to be leaving her again. I want to live for my daughter. I want to live for myself. I'm just really upset for how things worked out for me. My self-respect, morals, attachment to others have all went down.

On the subject of self-respect and morals, Tina emphasized that it is this loss that is the true root of families in turmoil and crisis in Halibut Point, suggesting that drug use is at the same time symptomatic of this social crisis *and* exacerbating it:

My friends are losing their values that they had—it's happening more and more. I found myself doing it—not giving a crap about anyone. Just getting high. Stealing my dad's checkbook. Doing stuff I would never do. Stealing my sister's, who has diabetes, needles. Doing stupid stuff for drugs.

⁴⁹ Tina was recently diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. In order to receive medical treatment, she must maintain sobriety for six months. She is currently staying at SAFE while she awaits a bed opening at the local treatment center in Dillingham.

Some “No-name” Gal from HUD

Women that currently lived or had at some point lived in low-income housing characterized these areas as the most marginalized part of the community. In fact, the physical and social differences of these areas are so pronounced, women often portrayed HUD as a community unto itself, despite being a mere mile’s distance from SAFE. Alcohol, drugs, danger and violence are part-and-parcel of HUD, with the majority of women seeing this area as the epicenter of violent crime in the community. Alice described the day-to-day conditions of HUD, observing her struggle in maintaining sobriety being largely exacerbated by the tight-knittedness of the area, the lack of privacy, and unavoidable peer influences:

It’s like a little community there—a little village. There’s always a lot of people on drugs and drinking. There’s a lot of gossip and everyone is so close to each other and there’s no privacy and everyone knows everything about everyone. Like for me up in HUD, anyone can walk or knock on my door with a bottle of alcohol at any time of the day—that’s how it is there. And it’s hard for me to say no. That’s why I have a lot of shame right now. It comes knocking on my door—I don’t go out looking for it. It can be almost every day. People from here or the village that need a place to party. It is actually very scary because most of the people who I know are getting into heroin and there’s a lot more violence happening because of that. People who are drinking get into fights and I think they feel like they have to be tough and act tough so they won’t get robbed. I see a lot of younger adults fighting each other—there’s a fight outside somewhere at least once or twice a week. You can hear a lot of yelling even across to the other apartments. It’s a pretty scary environment.

Tamara also situated HUD as a community socially separated from the rest of Dillingham, emphasizing the irreconcilable differences in drinking and addiction norms. Much like the rigid caste system of India that systematically categorizes people by their profession and place in society, Tamara describes HUD not just a place to live, but a social position one is born into. Complete matriculation into other social circles is nearly impossible. Even though Tamara physically changed living situations after marriage, she insists that she was still seen as “that sick person” in the eyes of others:

When I lived up HUD, that's the low income portion of Dillingham. That is the norm. To black out, to drink, to get just nasty. It's ok to puke on yourself and wake up there at HUD because that's what everybody does. That's how they were raised. But on *this* side of Dillingham—I've been exposed to that side too—is my husband and his family and their family and their friends. They don't drink like this. They are social drinkers. So it all depends on what side of town you come from or what you been exposed to and things like that. And I had a hard time with it because this is where I come from—the blackout, yucky drinking—and this is where my husband comes from. So when we got together, I was still that sick person. He's an alcoholic too, but he's more functional. Putting those together and us getting married and him bringing me into the family, I couldn't have a turkey dinner with our family because I always blacked out and passed out or acting stupid on the floor. And there'd be like *weird* look, you know?

At the height of her alcoholism, Tamara sought out drinking activities at HUD. Like Alice, Tamara also described HUD a safe drinking haven, free of judgment, shame, and social ostracism that she experienced in other social circles in the community. In addition to fueling her addiction to alcohol, visits to HUD also enhanced Tamara's feelings of solidarity and acceptance. She explained the social reprieve HUD afforded her:

At the end of my drinking, I was purposely seeking out the drinking pads knowing that that behavior is acceptable. I would pack a bag and say goodbye to my family and head up to HUD and go stay drunk up there. I purposely sought those situations out because I felt comfortable knowing they were as sick as I am. And there's not going to be any judgment. Not from the time you walk in and not from the time you walk out. It's not like going to a bar where people are going to be like "God! Did you see her? She just puked!" Not going to be like that up there. Everyone is out to do one thing, and that's get loaded. No judgment. No shame. No fear. Everyone is in the same boat. Same sides of an oar. We're all going in one direction and that's to get drunk.

Claire grew up at HUD and echoed Alice's and Tamara's characterization of this subsection of the community as a den of iniquity. Similar to how Alice and Tamara characterized addiction and dependence as inevitable daily realities of HUD, Claire also added sexual violence into this mix, boldly proclaiming that the experience of violence is simply part and parcel of everyday living:

CLAIRE: But you know what? It happens. It's part of life. Just get over it.

JEREMY: What's part of life?

CLAIRE: Getting raped. And to a certain extent, it's true. If you're going to get drunk in a room full of guys that made their intentions clear before you even started drinking that they wanted to have sex with you, chances are they're going to have sex with you if you pass out.

I regularly held group discussions with the SAFE staff as I collected more interview and field data. In one discussion with senior management, the subject of HUD came up. Indeed, SAFE recognized the sharp social divide between HUD and the rest of the community. Wendy's observations have been that the level of resources that are dedicated to criminal investigations at HUD are markedly inferior to those of the upper echelons of the community. In a fiery rhetoric, she implicated the structural inequality and classist attitudes that account for the injustices of HUD residents:

I can tell you what--If Lisa was riding her bike and she got sexually assaulted and raped and beat up and whatnot, they'd be on it in a heartbeat. If, say, some little gal from HUD who had a last name of whatever, you think they're going to put the same resources in it for some dumb-name gal? Because that's their perspective. And its bullshit, but it is exactly the perspective. She was drunk, in the wrong place, wearing the wrong clothes, she should have kept her eyes open and not drinking. It's her fault she got raped. And whether that is real or not, that's the perception. Especially if you're Native out here. There is an absolute double standard for how people are treated—how victims are treated.

I made a few trips out to HUD during my field visits with a SAFE staff member. My first impressions of this part of Dillingham squared exactly with Alice's characterization of HUD as a community unto itself. The physical conditions were enough to cast HUD apart from the rest of the community. Substandard housing abounds, distracting one from the stunning mountain and tundra views just on the horizon. Surrounding the neighborhood yards is an extensive fleet of broken-down cars and boats.⁵⁰ They're everywhere. Occasionally, I saw these vehicles occupied.

⁵⁰ Since 2006, the Curyung Tribe prioritized the Junk Car Removal Project, which seeks to clear up the abandoned car surplus in Dillingham. However, in order to be eligible for removal, vehicles must be cleaned out completely of

One man was found asleep in a truck with its passenger door missing. Two male teenagers laid claim to another car. Seeing this, it was easier to envisage Debbie's description of having been assaulted in the old, stranded vehicles in her village. Figures 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 display the physical state of HUD, markedly different from the rest of Dillingham (as shown in Chapter 3).

Figure 6.1: *South End of HUD*



any trash, all fluids must be drained from the vehicle, and the oil filter and battery must be removed. Once all hazardous materials are removed, vehicles are crushed and barged to a scrap metal dealer in Anchorage or Washington state. But none of this can happen until the vehicle's title holder is contacted and asked if they would like to participate in the program. The SAFE staffer who accompanied me to HUD estimated that the last known owner of some of the cars may be from 20 years ago, and many vehicles in Dillingham transfer hands without formal title transfer. Indeed, removal of these vehicles is time- and labor-intensive process.

Figure 6.2: *North End of HUD*



Figure 6.3: *North End of HUD*



Sexual Abuse as a Tool of Political Coercion

As discussed in Chapter 5, ANCSA legislation mandated the development of state-chartered corporations across Alaska Native regions and villages as mechanisms to assist Native groups in keeping their traditional homeland and economically empowering them to thrive in the modern world. As the Bristol Bay communities have attempted to fashion a corporate organizational structure, there has been compelling evidence of a clash in the values of conventional bureaucracy with the shared values of Alaska Natives. A variety of complex effects have subsequently been observed in communities and villages, including lack of shared vision and cooperation, tenuous relationships among village organizational entities and the people representing them, classist/elitist attitudes, and survival-of-the-fittest mentalities. Some women framed their abusive and violent experiences as byproducts of these complex issues facilitated by this political experiment. Sandra, for instance, explained how the village politics patterned the sexual harassment she has experienced in her working environment. She explained Seymour's abuse of power and influence in coaxing women employees for sexual favors and how her rebuking his advances resulted in her dismissal:

He said if I want a job, I would have to do him. That's what he said—"you'll have to do me first." And I was like "What?! What you mean *do you?*" "Have sex in the office right now," and I was like "What?! Are you crazy? I'll tell people what you just said to me." And this other lady got the job—she gave in. But I don't think she'll ever turn him in because he's in charge now and she's working in that office. I don't think she'll ever turn him in. He wanted to talk to me when I went to work. The two ladies got fired and I said "Oh no, I bet I'm going to be next." He offered to talk to me and went into the room. He got really close to me like this—and I was sitting down and he was trying to touch me. Nobody has ever done that to me. When I got up, he asked for my resignation and I said "Is it your doing or the Council's doing?" He never answered.

I asked Sandra to comment on why she believes Seymour continues to hold positions of power and prestige in the village, especially considering his status in the village as an outsider.

Sandra is convinced that false promises, shady politics, and favoritism sealed his successful election. She described how he triumphed over his political opponents in the most recent election:

He was the president before. You have to nominate yourself before they pick for president and everyone took their turn talking. He's the one that said a lot of things, and that's why they picked him. All these years, the outsiders who control the money never did nothing. They never got us building like they're supposed to—new community building or new village office. Two years ago, this young lady became a president and there's a new community village building. She's from Ironside. Now we have a new community building because of this lady. They voted for her for president. Then they had another election—she didn't win. They let Seymour win. I asked my cousin why he picked him—he knows what he's done in the past. He said “I forgot.”

Sandra also discussed how the dynamics of organizations in her village have become something of an all-boys club. “These men on the council, they laugh and say ‘this woman come to my room with a fifth and was drinking it in my room and we had sex,’” she recalled with disgust and contempt. Sandra also discussed having strained relations with other women in the village that had submitted to Seymour's sexual advances:

She don't like me anymore because I don't do the things she does. Like Seymour—for a job. I wasn't raised like that. She had always told them “Don't hire Sandra whatsoever. She'll become a boss. She's smart.” That's what she had said. Those are things. That's why she don't like me because I don't give in.

Finally, Sandra described how social progress in her village, particularly with respect to resurrecting indigenous models of wellness programming and tribal court, is stunted due to Seymour's own political agenda. She insisted that his lack of focus on such programs is directly correlated with his concern that prioritizing such activities would create a village movement that encourages open dialogue that might lead to his undoing:

Seymour is the one that does not recognize wellness. We are trying to start a Wellness program in the village. And he don't want nothing to do with this because it will create problems. People will start talking. He had something to

hide; that's why he never approved it. He won't approve tribal court either, because he's afraid people will start talking and get caught.

Nancy observed similar political struggles in her village, observing a nexus between abuses of political power and violence. Nancy noted that her daughter became the target of a brutal rape in Angler Gulch in the midst of Nancy's efforts to affect social change in the village. Nancy situated her daughter's rape as an act of political violence, committed alongside a series of assaults against her family in effort to stop her "moral crusade":

I worked on a community comprehensive plan for the village and the Native corporation because they couldn't get grants. This took a couple years. And in the meantime, I was on the community wellness committee and in an attempt to stop me and other community wellness people, three people sexually assaulted my daughter. They put sugar in the gas tank of my kicker, which was the only way we could do subsistence. They slashed the Honda tires. They threatened me and my kids. It was very terrible.

Infuriated with the village politics, fearful of her family's safety, and lacking the financial resources to remain in the village, Nancy, like other village women, was faced with a difficult decision to give up her youngest child, demonstrating the cascading effects of lack of cohesion and cooperation with Native villages:

I packed my stuff and went downtown and got an application from the Bristol Bay Economic Develop Corporation because I thought the only way I could make money—I couldn't qualify for public assistance—was to go fishing. The only fishing available that time of the year was trawling. I was never exposed to it and didn't know what was going to happen, but I got it. And I came back to the village and as soon as I landed, the village council guys came to my house and gave me a village card. And I said "what the hell is this for?" And they said they wanted me to stay and work with them because people were sitting there and listening to me. They had hopes. They made me a member and I said "thanks but I really am going to move." And they said "You don't have any money," and I said I'd make my own money to move. And I went out trawling and I was gone for three months. That was like living in hell. I made it through that and cleared and \$21,000. They gave me \$1800 and I bought my kids food and oil for the house. And I signed my son over to my mother-in-law. That was the hardest thing I ever did in my life was signing that paper so she could have my son Nick. All my other kids were over 16. Nick is my baby—he didn't want me to go. He was mad that I gave him away.

CONCLUSION

One afternoon, Ginny called me to notify me of a recent tragedy that had occurred in Eastwind Bay. Three men, all of whom Ginny knew well, had died in a boating accident the previous weekend. After a successful hunting trip, the three men loaded three moose onto their skiff, which overturned in the capricious waters of the Eastwind Bay River en route back to the village. During the night, and especially during the winter, this is an incredibly challenging task. It is believed that the boat overturned due to excess weight, with local residents commenting that the boat could handle one moose maximum. The men, as Ginny described them, connected the entire village, in that the three men were related to the rest of the village residents, by blood or by marriage. Fighting back tears, Ginny concluded her tragic story with a somewhat haunting maxim of life in rural Alaska: *There are no individual tragedies here.*

In a world where connectedness is not just an abstract concept, but an everyday experience, women's experiences with violence are not events that occur in isolation, but in full integration with their relationships with their physical, social, and spiritual environments. Theirs is certainly not a struggle in recognizing or defining violence and abuse, nor even the risk factors and protective factors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Generally, they are aware (some more than others) of what constitutes a healthy relationship and what doesn't. They know which women and children in the village may be at risk for victimization. Most were able to identify community resources available to aid women in crisis. And all recognized the magnitude of the sexual violence crisis at the community and state levels—they recognized the urgency of their predicament and the struggle of their Native brothers and sisters to hold on. Their struggle is more fundamental—to maintain safety and wellness in a modern era of rapid change and evolution. This is not to say that issues of alcohol and drug addiction, as well as intergenerational

transference of violence, do not matter to the violence that is so endemic to this area. To be clear, it is impossible to discuss one issue without addressing the other. However, the point to be made here is that in order to understand the full magnitude of violence against women in Bristol Bay, it is germane to appreciate the various structural, political, economic, and cultural rifts that have patterned a series of challenges to this community's collective identity, values, and traditions. Situating violence, alcohol and drug addiction, and myriad other social ills as maladaptive responses to these challenges not only provides a more localized, nuanced, and holistic understanding of personal and community trauma, but also informs how affected women attend to these problems. In Chapter 7, I focus on how women focus their decisions to disclose and report victimization.

**CHAPTER 7: WHO'S GONNA HELP YOU, ANYWAY?
FAMILIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION
AND THE DECISION TO REMAIN SILENT**

As discussed in Chapter 6, an important element of the phenomenology of violence against women in Bristol Bay is the recourse available to women affected by this violence. Generally, crimes of sexual and domestic violence are dramatically under-reported and also suffer from high rates of case attrition. Bristol Bay is no exception. As women bore their souls, unpacking incident after incident of brutality, violation, and suffering, it became clear that, on the whole, abusive episodes are generally not disclosed to others and those women that do disclose generally are met with skeptical or aggressive reception. The proverbial “secondary victimization”—the empirical finding that suggests rape victims that report their abuse suffer re-traumatization at the hands of social service providers (i.e. police, courts, social workers, etc.)—often manifested itself in conversations of how women’s experiences were received by informal and formal sources of social support. In this chapter, I discuss women’s experiences post-abuse, demonstrating that the harrowing experiences of violence among women do not end at physical victimization.

WHO ARE YOU TO SAY IT WAS RAPE?

Women often talked about a profound sense of helplessness after these experiences, seeing little to no recourse or resolution available to them. Many women with early abuse experiences stated that their attempts to confront an ongoing abusive situation were often futile. Lack of emotional support from one’s family was a common response to claims of victimization. Such was the case with Debbie, whose accusation of child molestation at the hands of her mother’s husband was met with fierce resistance:

My mom—when I was 6—she married this guy named Donnie. I was 6 when she married him and she was with him for 13 years. During those years, I refused to

visit her because he tried to molest me. And when I told her, she refused to believe me. She would take a broomstick handle and beat me and said I was a liar, that I was making up the story.

After Eva's father died, her mother remarried. When Eva was 13 years old, her mother's husband fondled her. Like Debbie, Eva experienced skepticism and disbelief from her mother:

My mom—her husband tried to touch me. And I told her. She was mad at first. After she talked to her stupid husband, she asked me if I did anything. How can you even ask your own daughter that? I'm still holding onto that, because she's still with him. I feel like she chose him over me.

Nancy encountered a similar scenario in reporting her very first sexual victimization to her mother:

The earliest [abuse] was when I was just a child. I never really told anyone about it. I was young. My mom and dad used to get a babysitter and the only person old enough was Reggie Oswau. That was the first time I was sexually assaulted. I was just a kid. That was just how it was, but I didn't want that, so I fought back. I told my mom and she just ignored me.

Women reported even greater aggressions from their families when alcohol was involved in a disclosure of abuse. It appeared that the presence of alcohol in any violent encounter was not only framed as a mitigating factor of the abuse, but often completely shifted the responsibility to the victim. Marcy described one encounter she had with her sister upon returning home from an alcohol-fueled rape:

I had a bruise on my cheek. My sister was at home; my mom was there. They said "How'd you get that black eye?"

"Pallpagtua." (I tripped over).

I know I reeked because my sister said "Go drink around some more!" A couple days later, I tried to mention to her, my sister. "Sis. I was scared. But I know it wasn't right. I'm young. What if I get pregnant?" She said "Go drink around some more. You probably asked for it."

Violet's gang rape in high school was committed while Violet was heavily under the influence of alcohol at a party. She explained that her mother and best friend—two people she

depended heavily on for emotional support and guidance—dismissed her trauma as inevitable and deserved:

When I told my mom, she said “that’s what you get for going out and drinking.” And that’s why I never told anyone else, because my mom and best friend told me I deserved it. So I believed them.

Eva reported a similar experience with her own mother. Eva noted how her mother’s reaction to her admission put a distance between them:

When I first reported it, I hadn’t told my mom and the VPSO said “you better tell her.” I was scared to tell her because I was drinking. And even she was like “see what you get for drinking?” I was so mad. I didn’t talk to her for three months. You don’t say that to your own kids. I don’t see how moms can live with that.

Tamara’s explanation of norms and expectancies surrounding alcohol consumption shows how embedded victim blaming is in discourses of rape and alcohol:

Like there’s been times there was a black out and a guy climbed on top and had sex—who are you to say it was rape? And who are you to say it was unconsensual if you were in a black out? And how come you were drinking with him when you knew he’s got a reputation for doing that to drunks? So it was a lot of that type of stuff going on.

Women that proceeded with formal charges against perpetrators often also cited lack of emotional support from family members. In some cases, women linked the decision to disclose victimization to law enforcement to the breakdown of family relationships. Terry described the rift that her police report caused within her family, following the formal charges pressed against her nephew:

It created a big problem with me and family’s intimacy as far as Christmas dinner, Thanksgiving dinner—we don’t even do all that anymore. We don’t do birthday parties. Me and my brother are finally getting along but my sister-in-law blames me for it. How could that be my fault? It broke my heart and I went through a nervous breakdown over it. I developed a pill problem—thank god it didn’t escalate into heroin; I wasn’t that stupid. Also alcohol issues—heavier ones—to self-medicate. And by myself; I wouldn’t go out and drink with anyone else. It also created a lot of anger, a lot of really bad insecurities, hate towards men; my relationship didn’t last after that. I had affairs while under the influence of

alcohol, which is horrifying. So now I'm totally single and haven't had a relationship for over a year. Maybe more. Just to get my self-respect back. It's been a long process.

Claire noted a similar tension within her family following the arrest and prosecution of her cousin for sexual assault:

Well, my dad—him and my uncle were best friends. Him and my auntie (she owns a gas station) were best friends. We would do family barbeques together all the time. Family get-togethers with the *maqii* and everything. After that happened, there's no more family barbeques or get-togethers. When I see my auntie, she looks right through me. When I see my uncle, he looks right through me. When I see anyone in my family connected to my cousin, I get a dirty look. And this is in my community for 8 years now.

When Tamara was 10 years old, she was molested by a distant cousin that performed chores and generally handiwork around the house. Tamara disclosed the incident to her older sister, making her promise not to tell anyone. Her sister ended up sharing the story with a friend whose relative was a town magistrate. Tamara described what ensued next as a rigmarole involving counselors, social workers, school staff, and the police. She described how this process affected her relationship with her grandmother and other family members:

She didn't understand what was going on; she didn't speak English. They did send a social worker. This was my distant cousin—I guess he got arrested and he did go to jail for it. But in the meantime, my family was mad at me. They blamed me for telling. I just remember my grandma being very angry with me. His side of the family was very angry and cold toward our side of the family. A lot of the blame went on me, and I didn't even tell. So I harbored a lot more guilt and shame.

IF I KNEW THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, I WOULD HAVE HAD NO PART IN THAT: INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Women that proceeded with formal reporting of victimization had varied experiences with respect to their engagement with criminal justice players from law enforcement to victim's advocates to the courts. These experiences ranged from neutral, at best, to dismissive and destructive, at worst. The most positive experiences with formal criminal justice agents were

described as being swift, to-the-point, and involving minimal investment on the woman's part. Ginny's victimization, for instance, typifies this kind of experience. Shortly after being sexually assaulted, Ginny phoned village law enforcement who quickly responded to scene. The officer brought Ginny to the hospital and explained the medical exam (i.e. rape kit) that was necessary for evidence collection. Ginny emphasized that through no fault on the officer's part, she still harbored intense feelings of horror. "It's a terrifying feeling, she described. "And all that time, all the ugliest ever feelings came upon me: being ashamed, being alone, feeling dirty, feeling disrespected—the ugliest ever feelings all at the same time." Ginny subsequently testified in court against her perpetrator. Again, Ginny identified how feelings of fear and discomfort impacted her during these proceedings. "It was the most uncomfortable feeling, especially when he looked at me and knowing he did that," she recalled. "I didn't want him to look at me. At one point I almost covered my face with a piece of paper. It was the most uncomfortable feeling—that kind of I feeling I never felt before." Ginny noted that the court had asked her to furnish a victim impact statement, which she had declined. "I already said what I had to say; If I never forgave, I would have become bitter," she explained. For Ginny, resolution on her case was not the product of an official adjudication, but rooted in her ability to forgive her offender. In Chapter 8, I will expand more on how women negotiate between Western notions of justice and indigenous values honoring forgiveness.

Tina's most recent victimization occurred about two years ago. After a night of heavy drinking, she awoke to her cousin attempting to sexually stimulate with his hand. Tina called upon an aunt to come and diffuse the situation, who in turn, reported the incident to the police. Tina spoke highly of her experience with the chief of police and his ability to quickly resolve the issue:

Even though I was wasted, he didn't care. I was like "I didn't even want to call you." And he said "Tina, did he do it or not?" I didn't want to tell him—I even told him "What about my aunt? What about my mom? It's embarrassing. Everyone is gonna know." And he said "tell me if he did it or not." I said he did and he just left and arrested him. And then he came back and talked to me and said they were taking him in. It's illegal to molest someone while they're sleeping—that's sexual abuse. It was on the news and my family was talking about it. They didn't know it was me. They were just "Oh my God, Jason raped someone?"

Having heard some particularly disturbing narratives regarding women's interaction with law enforcement, it was surprising to hear of Tina's seamless reporting experience, especially considering her intoxicated state at the time her disclosure was made. After she described this disclosure experience, I asked her she felt the chief of police treated her. She simply, but tellingly responded "the chief of police is my dad's best friend."

Generally, women's interactions with the criminal justice system were much more concentrated on the other end of the experience continuum, characterized by inconsistent police work, victim blaming, alienation, and miscarriages of justice. Women often cited the lack of public resources as one of many reasons that unabated violent victimization against women continues to flourish, particularly in the villages. "There are very low family services workers here," said Carrie of Eastwind Bay. "Even the ones that are here don't stick around long." Marcy pinned her despondence on the lack of resources within her village, as well as the general attitudes and norms surrounding sexual abuse that minimized or even denied these experiences that available providers seemed to endorse:

Back in those days, it was like who's going to help you anyway? What can anyone do? What's done is done. We didn't have no VPSOs⁵¹. We didn't have no

⁵¹ In the villages, there are no police or state troopers, only Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs), who are usually local residents (though sometimes outsiders) who are trained to monitor the safety of the village and resolve conflicts as the first responders. Essentially, VPSOs investigate and resolve misdemeanor crimes and report felony crimes to the Alaska State Troopers. The position is generally poorly paid and not very well-respected, as VPSOs frequently find themselves in conflict-of-interest situations where they are forced to monitor and report on family and friends. Consequently, at any given time, there may be villages with no VPSO; hence, no law enforcement in the village whatsoever.

counselors. And who would they believe? “Oh she’s just making it up. Maybe they just got into an argument or something.”

Marcy’s framing of the violence epidemic as an “every man/woman for themselves” scenario, especially where law enforcement and other formal of channels of social control were concerned, was echoed by many of the women. Three days before her wedding, Alice was beaten by her fiancé, prompting her to rethink her decision on marriage. Having already paid for three plane loads of extended relatives to fly in for the wedding, her parents talked her back into the event. She described the graphic and extreme nature of the incident, emphasizing the futility in reporting to the VPSO in her village:

I had my own place that I was renting—a two bedroom, two story house from one of my uncles. All my lady cousins and aunts were there with me; we were sipping and when he came by and realized we were drinking—I was using the bathroom—he walked right in and grabbed me and dragged me outside telling me I needed to get out of there and yelling at me for drinking. I was like “Oh my gosh I’m using the bathroom!” and just brought me out there and I was trying to pull up my pants. It was so humiliating. And none of my cousins or aunts did anything. I was yelling and he threw me on the ground outside. He got on top of me and he had his arm on me, holding me down, and he started choking me and I started making the noise, and he thought I was joking. He was like “I’m not hurting you” and started laughing at me. He wouldn’t let me get up for a while and I think he noticed I was starting to get red in the face, and he finally got up. But he still wouldn’t let me go. I finally got loose from him and I ran towards the parents’ house and he started running after me for a while, but I hid and he couldn’t find me. That’s when I went to my parents’ house and told them what happened and we called the VPSO. We made the report and they didn’t do anything. They didn’t even come to the scene.

Sandra has observed a cultural lacuna between VPSOs and the villagers. In particular, she discussed how one VPSO’s lack of local knowledge and linguistics adversely affected case adjudication in Ironside. My dialogue with her below demonstrates how the differential meaning and understanding ascribed to certain terms can have a profound impact:

SANDRA: There's quite a few families in the village that are hurting because of this person who was a VPSO. His reports weren't good. He put "upset" in them. Upset is a big word. When I was a SAFE advocate, I learned what "upset" it means. Lots of folks in the community are hurt because of him. Their kids are in jail because of his report—how he wrote it. Using the word "upset."

JEREMY: What does "upset" mean?

SANDRA: This person is very violent right now. That's what it means. This person needs to go in a hole right now. That's what "upset" means—very angry.

Terry identified a chain of egregious error in her interactions with the criminal justice system immediately following her rape. She explained that her nephew, the perpetrator, previously had a restraining order filed against him for breaking and entering Terry's home:

There was a restraining order against him and the day that it was up, this happened to me. And the police officers didn't even contact me to say that the restraining order was up. I knew he was in town because he had been at my place of work just recently and he was also at my boyfriend's house when my boyfriend was down at Ekuk.

One night during the Christmas holidays, Terry had hosted a party at her home. When her boyfriend left to drive the rest of the guests home, she was left alone in the house. She was asleep for a short time before she awoke to being assaulted and restrained in her bed by her nephew:

I woke up to someone pouncing on me, ripping my clothes off. It was a horrific scene—they said it was one of the more horrific scenes they ever investigated. I called 911 and the girl that had been seeing my boyfriend before me—the dispatcher—didn't even alarm the police officers. It wasn't even on record.

With no hope of police response, Terry subsequently described a particularly graphic assault. While her perpetrator was attempting to "clean up" after the assault, she received a call from her boyfriend, who was concerned that she hadn't been picking up the phone for the past couple hours. She quickly informed him of her situation, after which the police immediately

responded. She described the investigation process as haphazard at best, noting that her perpetrator went undetected on her property while the police conducted their search:

There was a phone in my room and I saw it blinking—thank god the ringer was off because the predator was still in the house and he didn't know—tried to clean up the scene—doing laundry and washing the sheets. But I said “Hello?” It was my boyfriend and he said “Why haven't you been answering the phone?” I just said “I was raped” and I hung up the phone because I was scared. Immediately the cops were there, and the predator fled. And there were two cops; I don't know why one of them didn't chase him because he actually stayed on my premises throughout that night after the rape kit test. And I'm just wondering why the other cop didn't search the premises because he was actually there in one of the old beat up cars that's on my lot. And I had my boyfriend stay with me that night; he stayed out on the futon while I was in my room. And he heard someone outside the window and he went out and searched the grounds, and came up empty handed. I just don't understand why the cops didn't totally surround the area to try to find him. They didn't. I was upset about that. They did not look for him. I found that very unusual. It seems like they would have been out searching for him. Sometimes I wonder if my boyfriend didn't stay with me that night, if he would have hopped through that window and finished off the job.

Like Terry, Alice also discussed sloppy police investigations that had substantial impacts on a victimization that she reported to the police. She recalled another episode of domestic violence in which the police did respond, but ended up putting charges on her—despite her sustaining severe physical injuries due to the assault:

I had just got back from shopping. As soon as I got back, [my son] came running to me and started crying and I asked him what was wrong and he told me that [his dad] spanked him. I didn't spank him; I had no reason to. He was a good kid and listened well. So I pulled down his pants to check his butt and there was a hand mark. It really hurt me to see that so I confronted him and when I confronted him, it got into an argument. He was doing the dishes and I was helping him; and I went into the bathroom to empty out some food into the toilet and then I was coming back out and I was saying something, arguing about spanking. And he came marching up to me and he got so close to my face, I put my hand up and as soon as I put my hand up—I didn't touch him or anything—and then he just went crazy on me. He kept pushing me and grabbing me and so I started hitting him. I tried calling and calling for help. I ran to the phone but he yanked it out of the wall. When I was hitting him, he grabbed my arm and started making me hit him on top of the head. That's when it broke—right here. I finally called for help and I shut the door and it was able to lock. He came pounding on it and he heard me calling for help, so he calmed himself down. I kept the door locked until the cops

came. There was one cop with me and I was telling him the story, and there was another cop with him telling the story. They let us do it one at a time; we could hear him through the door and when he was telling his side I was like “that’s not what happened” and I was holding my arm like this because I couldn’t lift it at all. They actually put the charges on me because they could see no physical injuries on me, but when they came he had a nosebleed. It was about five minutes until they got there that I closed the door and locked it; and apparently he had scratches on him. But they arrested me so they brought me to the hospital—an ambulance came and I couldn’t lift my arm so they took X-rays and it was broken. I don’t know why they charged me; I was the one with the broken arm and I was five months pregnant. He wasn’t charged at all.

Some women also discussed adverse experiences with social services professionals.

Tamara discussed how her early sexual abuse experiences were handled by her school. In addition to receiving poor reception from various family members, she also noted that the institutional reactivity to the situation (i.e. mandatory counseling) was equally traumatic:

I ended up seeing a counselor at the school, which traumatized me even more because I was so little and I was already feeling bad about everything that was going on. And then they were pulling me from my classroom in front of all my peers and making me talk to a complete stranger. The whole thing was traumatic.

Debbie has gone through mental health treatment programs all her life. In this setting, she desired to bring closure to her childhood trauma through confronting her perpetrator. She described the dismissive response she received:

I went to mental health for all my elementary years through my teenage years—in and out of treatment programs. I’ve been through five treatment programs and each one told me I had childhood issues that I had to deal with if I wanted to become a sober person, and I go “ok so let’s deal with them.” I asked [a counselor] to help me confront Seymour and he had to have a meeting with Area Health Corporation before he could do it, and I guess they had a meeting and said they can’t do such a thing. Because it was my word against his and it’s been so long, and he told me I had to get over it.

In addition to feeling ostracized by her family, Claire also described her experience in court following her rape. Though Claire did report her victimization to the police, went through a rape exam, and testified against her perpetrator in court, she made it clear that she would never

go through the experience again, namely because of the humiliation she experienced during the trial. Claire's recount of the trial clearly points to how a "jury of one's peers" in a remote rural community truly reflects secondary victimization of rape victims:

There was a sick trial. They took pictures of my private and flashed them to everyone in the courtroom. That's so sick. They blew up the pictures to half the size of one of those windows over there, and showed everyone in the courtroom pictures of my private. That's so sick. If I would have known that was going to happen, I would have had no part in that. All of the judge, jury, cousins, family members, people in pews saw what my private looked like back then. That's humiliating. It's gross. To see some of these jurors to this day is embarrassing.

Eva also expressed her disappointment with the court system. After going through the inner-turmoil in deciding whether or not to even report her rape in the first place, Eva was outraged when the court set her perpetrator's bail at an extraordinarily low amount. While Eva's perpetrator was free on bail, he raped another woman in the village. She described how the sum of these experiences has soured her on notion of a fair and accessible justice system for all. Like Claire, Eva describes a secondary victimization which took a greater emotional toll on her, compared to the rape itself:

In the past two years, every phone call and email I got about my case brought back all the same hurt and depression and that would last for at least a week. That wasn't good to deal with either, because I was trying to be happy. The longer it took, the more I felt like the court wasn't taking it as seriously as they should. When they set his bail, I was so disgusted and disappointed that it was so low. They only gave him a \$2500 bail without a third party when the state asked for \$20000 bail with a third party. That disappointed and disgusted me so bad. How could they let someone like that out with such a low bail and without a third party? He had the opportunity to ruin another woman's life and he took it with force while he was on bail for my case. His other victim—her case was combined with my case because it happened while he was on bail for my case. She was in a lot worse shape than I was from what I heard. I thought I was doing bad, but when I heard about her...that's the one thing I was trying to prevent—him doing that anymore. I was trying to prevent him from ruining other women's lives and their families' lives. The court failed me on that part by setting his bail so low. I felt the court didn't believe me or think it was as serious as it should be. I don't think it should matter how much force was involved because you're still dealing with someone whose life has been ruined by a guy that knows right from wrong, and

still chose to do the wrong thing. I think all cases should be treated equally, at least, in the sense of seriousness. I felt the court wasn't going to do anything until he did it again while on bail. That's when they finally started to take it more serious. That wasn't good for me to see or go through, because I didn't trust the court either.

Given the sum of women's experiences throughout various phases of criminal justice proceedings, it wasn't entirely surprising to hear women's resistance toward accessing formal channels of justice. On her experiences in a court setting, Claire mused "If I would have known that was going to happen, I wouldn't have said anything to anyone." Similarly, Violet expressed a complete lack of faith in the local police department. Though she did not report her rape to the police, she has had several encounters with law enforcement in matters pertaining to her step-children's biological mother.

Me personally—my family and I have protective orders against my step-daughter's mom, because her drug addiction makes her very abusive. When I go to the store, I look behind my shoulders, check to make sure I can enter the store, and I constantly have that hesitation because I know the police department is not going to protect me. I don't even bother calling them anymore because it's better to handle it on my own. The court system isn't going to help me unless they're going to make money off it somehow. And those are just my opinions and they are very strong opinions. Because of the victim advocacy I have received here, I have those opinions.

Like many others, Violet's "every person for themselves" attitude has been partially shaped by organizational agenda and practice of law enforcement agencies in Bristol Bay. Violet fervently charged that classist attitudes (observed by many women at the broader community level) are what guide much of police decision-making in Bristol Bay communities:

They pick and choose if they are going to write a report, they pick and choose if they are going to press charges, they pick and choose if they are going to arrest. Depends on your last name, who you're related to, your history in the community, your family's history in the community—it's all their personal opinion over there. They treat the victim as if the victim is the perpetrator and vice versa. There's more requirements of the victim than of the perpetrator. It's up to the victim to file the protective order, modify the protective order, or strengthen the protective order. They could care less.

INTERACTIONS WITH SHELTER

SAFE had somewhat of a rocky start in terms of garnering public support for its mission to put an end to domestic violence and sexual assault. Similarly situated women's programs throughout rural Alaska suffered similar social stigmas. For instance, a study of Tundra Women's Coalition in Bethel showed that village unfamiliarity with the concept of the shelter and fears of public exposure were chief concerns that hindered women from accessing shelter services early on (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Ginger explained how SAFE's foray into family social services was initially met with sharp resistance and criticism from the community:

People didn't understand about the prevalence and impact of DV and SA. Even if you knew people that beat their wife and actually saw it, there was still this attitude. They pretty much thought that we were a bunch of hairy-legged, over-reacting, man-hating lezbos! Femi-nazis. Just a big nuisance. And this was exacerbated by the fact that the people we were helping were not likely to go around town telling people they were victims. Husbands and partners (the batterers) were very loud! Telling everyone that SAFE is breaking up our family, SAFE is taking away our kids, SAFE is trying to sexually seduce my wife in the shelter. There was that kind of stuff.

Despite these obstacles, SAFE's name recognition and approval rating have both substantially improved since the early 90s. Unlike their experiences with the formal criminal justice system, women usually spoke very highly of SAFE and their experiences in shelters, generally.⁵² "SAFE has always been a part of my life here and there," said Alice. "I have seen a lot of women get back on their feet because of this place. They've helped me a couple times."

⁵² Undoubtedly, selection bias largely influences any conclusions pertaining to SAFE or the shelter approach to violence management. It is entirely possible that there may have been potential participants that wished to be interviewed, but not endorsing favorable attitudes toward the shelter and thus declined participation because of interview logistics. In fact, Tamara advised me to consider alternative venues for interviewing other survivors (especially male survivors): "Heads-up for next time: Interview someplace else next time. When I worked as a legal advocate, I had to help a few men with restraining orders, but because of the stigma and labeling, they refused to come to SAFE."

“I’ve always received support, encouragement, and empowerment inside these walls at SAFE,” said Nancy.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, many women stayed at the shelter when they were experiencing substance abuse-related issues. Often, these women frequented the shelter when experiencing triggers that made them feel vulnerable to relapse. Charlene, Marcy, Tina, and Alice all had intermittent stays at SAFE throughout the duration of the fieldwork for this very reason. When I spoke with Alice, she had checked herself into SAFE the previous evening, having come off a week-long drinking binge. “It’s not able to come knocking here,” she said. “They have guidelines here that they follow and there is a lot of structure.” Marcy also acknowledged SAFE’s role in her quest for sobriety. “If it wasn’t for SAFE, I’d probably still be drinking,” she explained. Marcy also stated that her experiences and lessons learned at SAFE prompted her to enter Beauty for Ashes (a faith-based conference initiative designed to educate and train individuals on how to interact with, work with and respond to those whose lives have been impacted by domestic violence, abuse and neglect). For Tina, structure was also germane to her ability to abstain from alcohol. She emphasized that SAFE was the only supportive environment that would allow her to continue her sobriety efforts while she awaited an open bed at the local treatment facility (Jake’s Place):

I just came over to detox—got myself over here to get treatment. Staying at SAFE. I have plenty of places here in Dillingham to stay, but I would rather be here in a sober environment where I can’t drink. I need that kind of structure to stay sober and get into Jake’s Place. I came here because I know it’s a safe environment not to drink. I know I can’t drink here. That’s what I need. I need structure.

Although women highlighted structure and guidelines as important aspects SAFE’s supportive environment, it also bears mentioning that some women highlighted the structure as non-Draconian and non-rigid, suggesting that avoidance of a “one-size-fits-all” approach in

managing shelter clientele is much appreciated. It has been suggested that non-Native run shelters have evolved into a more professional, medical model that employs daily schedules, structured routines, and little wiggle room to accommodate clients from varying backgrounds. Tamara talked about her experience at a shelter in Anchorage, praising the non-regimented management style:

I didn't know what to expect. I was pretty shut down by that point. I liked that I wasn't bothered and questioned. I was just trying to heal. I was pretty damaged both physically and mentally, so that space and that "leave her alone, let her rest" was badly needed. I was so afraid then that I was happy they left their TV on because I needed sound because I was so scared. They said "No you can sit right here on the couch and take all the time you need." There wasn't any "You gotta get to bed! You gotta have the lights off! You gotta be in a room!" It wasn't like that.

Some women explained how their interactions with SAFE facilitated entrée into formal criminal justice proceedings. When I met Sandra, she was staying at the shelter for a few days. Unlike most women who were staying at the shelter, Sandra was not experiencing ongoing abuse, nor was she suffering addiction-related issues; she was staying at the shelter to acquire legal advice. Sandra was in the process of filing a sexual harassment grievance against Seymour. However, because the public notary in her village was the second cousin of her perpetrator, Sandra feared that confidentiality might be compromised. Every time I encountered Sandra, she had a thick stack of opened envelopes, letters, and legal documents in tow. I frequently observed Sandra interacting with Lisa, as Lisa explained legal concepts and next steps involved for Sandra to notarize her complaints. After enduring seven years of domestic violence, Brenda confided her abuse to a close friend, who notified the authorities of the abuse. She described how SAFE helped her in filing a restraining order against her then-boyfriend:

They sent the police up there and that was my first encounter with SAFE. It ended up being assault in the third degree that they charged him with. And that was

when I found myself walking through these doors for my very first restraining order.

The majority of women had, at some point, worked for SAFE in some capacity. Jobs ranged from victim advocates, legal advocates, children's services workers, and clerical staff. Violet explained that it was through her employment at SAFE that she became aware of what constituted sexual violence:

I never knew the actual definition of sexual violence until I started working here in 2013. And once I was clearly given a definition of what sexual violence, or assault, or rape—whatever you wanna call it—what it really was, is when I realized I had been a victim of it whether I liked it or not. But I kept denying it because I didn't know the true meaning of what it was until I worked here.

Though women overwhelmingly praised SAFE in serving women and families, they also discussed some problematic interactions, as well. In Chapter 4, lack of privacy was discussed as one of the enduring challenges of the Bristol Bay community. Some women discussed how the fears of public exposure in a shelter setting are still a chief concern of women in need today. Tamara explained why she began to disassociate from some of SAFE's auxiliary services, noting that the guarantee of confidentiality and privacy in a small-town setting is next to impossible:

That's one major thing being a local in a small town. Once a person has violated that, there's no coming back. TO be honest, SAFE used to be an excellent resource. They have SISTRS every Thursday night. But because Dillingham is so small, word gets out, someone is talking, and you don't want to be affiliated with SAFE anymore. That's just a hard thing—having accessible services that maintain and understand the confidentiality and the need for it. It's nice to know that there's other people out there that have some similar struggles. You need to have access to get to them. I had to find a therapist all the way out in Anchorage—a 600-dollar plane ride every month. Because the confidentiality is the main thing in a small rural town. Once they see someone coming here or if there's an employee here, that's already breached. It gets all over town and people are calling saying "Don't go there!"

As mentioned in Chapter 3, SAFE is the sole domestic violence/sexual assault agency serving the entire Bristol Bay area. For village women in crisis, the only way to access SAFE's

shelter is by air. Sandra commented that for most women in need in her village, cash income is limited, thus hindering most women's ability to leave the village in the event of an emergency:

I hear of people that want to get help, but there's no money. It costs 100 bucks to fly from Ironside to Dillingham, one way. Jobs are scarce. A lot of women need help. Even if they want to talk to advocates or make reports, they don't because there's no money to travel with.⁵³

A while back, Sandra had worked for SAFE as a village advocate.⁵⁴ In this capacity, she was often the first point of contact for women in crisis in her village, and was responsible for providing SAFE with documentation detailing incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault, including information on the perpetrator. She explained the challenge of working in this role in a community where so many residents are related either blood or marriage. When faced with the task of reporting a family member (a grandson) suspected of sexual assault, Sandra resigned from her position, emphasizing that she had to prioritize family bonds:

I told SAFE if it ever comes across to my family, I'll resign. And then I got a call—go do an interview because of my grandson's family. And I said "What?! I don't think so. I can't." Because my grandson—they're my family. Where will my grandson go? I'll feel badly. People would blame me. And I decided to resign. That's when I told SAFE everyone is related in the village. And I advised SAFE that maybe there shouldn't be SAFE advocates in the village.

Sandra's skepticism about providing social services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in this rural village should not be interpreted as her condoning violence and abuse, but rather, a reflection of the true social reality of rural Alaska villages. Despite increased attention paid to the severity of sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as growing awareness of resources available to victims of these crimes, there is still a pervasive silence

⁵³ SAFE retains funding to provide emergency airfare for village women needing to access safe shelter.

⁵⁴ Village advocates essentially serve as SAFE's tentacles to the villages. Village advocates provide community education and act as a buffer between victims of sexual assault and SAFE. They are often the first point of contact for village women in crisis and assist victims of violence in crime reporting and utilizing SAFE services.

surrounding such crimes. This silence, discussed in the next section, is instrumental to guarding the collective family unit from risks of exposure and separation.

WE DEAL WITH IT OURSELVES: WHY WOMEN DON'T DISCLOSE VICTIMIZATION

More often than not, women did not disclose abuse to family or law enforcement, keeping these incidents totally private. Given the pervasiveness of adverse reactions to both formal and informal agents of social support, it isn't particularly surprising that a number of women discussed incidents of victimization where they opted to remain silent, in both childhood and adulthood. However, women's silence on sexual and domestic violence was not only the product of poor prior experiences with disclosure. For some women, silence on these matters was deeply rooted in familial and cultural norms supportive of non-disclosure.

That's Dirty Talk!

Open discussion of sexuality, especially in the context of personal violation and abuse, was generally not recommended and in some cases, forbidden, in many women's households. "It was a hush hush thing," said Violet. "You didn't dare talk about it. It's ugly talk. That's what I remember hearing the elders saying. Because my mom tried to speak up about what my grandpa was doing to her and I remember my Gram saying 'Shhh! We don't talk about that. That's ugly, ugly talk.'" The discourse on non-disclosure, in addition to the stories on the intergenerational abuse that ran rampant through many generations of families, provided compelling evidence of silence as a family tradition. "I didn't want to be like my mom," explained Violet. "I didn't want to talk ugly the way my mom did about her dad." Debbie, about 35 years Violet's senior, recounted an almost identical admonishment against speaking out on her sexual abuse as a child from her grandparents:

My grandparents always said “we don’t dare discuss stuff like that.” Because if you do, it was part of your fault, or you had something to do with it. Even though you were the victim, you were still part of the problem. You instigated it.

Claire described the advice she received from an aunt on how to deal with a sexual assault:

You know what I do? Just take a shower and forget about it, because what else can you do besides whine about it? My auntie told me “just take a shower and forget about it. Let it go down the drain and just don’t tell anyone about it. And you’ll feel better. Nobody needs to know.” The shower is way better than telling anybody. Way better. Less humiliating.

Some women identified open dialogues of sexuality, abusive or not, as taboo subjects within their families. “Back in that day, we weren’t allowed to talk about it in our home,” Debbie explained. My grandparents always would say that we didn’t talk about private parts or other people having sex. It was totally forbidden.” “I remember my cousin telling her mama something and her saying ‘Hush! We don’t talk about things like that!’ At 11, I didn’t know what those things were,” said Brenda.

Ginny situated her own sexual awakening as a self-learning experience, receiving very little counsel from her mother or grandmother on the subject

I was told what sex was—that’s what husbands and wives do. I was never explained how it was supposed to go, how it was supposed to feel, this and that. No. It was more of a self-learning experience. My poor first husband—we didn’t even have our wedding night. He waited almost a month because he was so scared. He didn’t know what to do! It became kind of a serious subject to me when I got there between my grandmother and I and my mother and I. They were the hardest ones. It was more of a secret. I don’t know how to explain it. Secrets or secrecy or not allowed to talk about it. I told them “I need to know! I need to know.” I got frustrated over it, because it wasn’t explained to me then. They got frustrated. Well, not actually frustrated. It was a tough subject for them to talk about because they were also not taught. They weren’t taught—there was no...Ahh! It was not a good subject for them, I can tell you that. With my grandmother’s generation—I wanted to talk to her, to get her to talk about it. I was more surprised it was more “figure it out on your own” deal. She was told when she got married—all she was told was that “that will happen—your husband will take you to bed.” And that was it. For her, she told me “I’m uncomfortable,”

because she didn't know about it. There was no education on that. With my mother, it was almost the same thing, but it was a little bit more easier for her to talk about it. I was like "Why did you not tell me about it? Why was it not told to me?"

Some women attributed the stifling reactions on conversations of sexuality to their stunted awareness of what constitutes sexually abusive behavior. Some women noted that, as children, they often situated themselves as willing participants. In accepting some of the rather graphic and quite traumatizing experiences as normal, women demonstrated some degree of acceptance of rape myths. This manifested itself most commonly in the form of victim blaming statements. After numerous episodes of child sexual abuse at the hands of cousins, an uncle, and her grandfather, Maddy explained how her self-realization of sexually abusive behaviors didn't emerge until her 30s:

I always felt like I was a participant, not a victim. It wasn't until...I don't think I realized I was a victim until I became a mom in 1994. It was after that that I really realized I was a victim, not a participant.

Debbie linked the silence on sexual abuse and sexuality, in general, to the perceived normality of these behaviors. Debbie owned up to having engaged in abusive behaviors herself, attributing her cessation of these behaviors solely to her awakening on what constituted abusive behaviors:

There was a time in elementary school I almost thought it was normal to let people jump on you and do you when they feel like it. And even me, I'll admit it—I remember thinking it was ok for me to do that to Noddy—this little girl. But only when I started realizing that was not right, that it was not normal, I discontinued doing that.

Carrie also associated the string of sexual/reproductive health sequelae she's suffered in adulthood to her mother's admonishment against speaking out against her sexually abusive episodes in childhood:

I thought to myself “she doesn’t even care about me; I’m just going to let them do whatever they want to me.” It affected me by being untrustworthy, unfaithful, not being honest, not being loyal. I wanted to be more sexually involved with these other men. I picked up Chlamydia and Syphilis. Gonorrhea, too. I even had cervical cancer before, which I found out can happen if you have more than one sexual partner.

Keeping Families Intact

The literature on child sexual abuse has identified a host of reasons that children remain silent about sexual abuse, including confusion about the event, wanting to protect the offender, as well as personal feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and fear of retaliation. These issues were identified by many of the women. When I asked Diane if there was any police involvement following her date rape experience, she concisely replied, “No, I was too afraid.”

Though themes of fear, embarrassment, and shame were certainly evident, I found that these were not central to the silence surrounding abuse. As women discussed the silence surrounding their abuse, it became clearer that silence was not merely an individual defense mechanism, but often a mechanism to protect the family unit. Debbie provided some insight on why silence has become a family tradition in Native families:

White people—say, my white friends—they are able to communicate about it and talk about it. They aren’t as scared. Whereas in the Native home, they are hiding. They’re scared. They’re ashamed of themselves. I was raised in an Eskimo home, so the way I was brought up—“we can’t let people know who we really are because if they know they might do something to us like take us away.” When I was little and the teacher came to sign us up for school, somebody would see them walking by in the window and they’d say “*Kass’ags* are coming!” That meant run and hide, and we did. We used to run and hide and listen and see what they wanted.

Debbie’s explanation introduces a layer to silence that is internally understood by most Native people: Keep quiet or your family will be broken apart. Prior to the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, thousands of “at-risk” Alaska Native and Native American children were forcibly removed from their homes and villages, sent to foster homes and boarding

school, and lost touch (sometimes permanently) with their families, culture, and traditions. ICWA mandated that, except in the rarest of circumstances, Native children must be placed with their relatives or tribes in an effort to keep Native families intact. Though Debbie's narrative predates ICWA, the vestiges of state-sponsored kidnapping (as many Native tribes have understandably labeled it) live on in the Native people today.⁵⁵ The majority of unwanted childhood sexual experiences were experienced at the hands of family members. Most women characterized their families as "the sum being greater than its parts." In that vein, experiencing abuse at the hands of a family member was bad, but talking against that family member was decidedly worse. "My first cousin didn't come forward because her mom didn't want the troopers⁵⁶ to come around asking questions," Eva explained. Tamara recalled her experience of being sexually molested and subsequently processed through the child welfare system as somewhat alien to the traditional Yup'ik way of handling family matters:

At 10 or 11, I was being yanked from my classrooms and being forced to talk to strangers and just scary people. My grandma found out about it, and she didn't speak English. All she knew was there was a Caucasian social worker coming to our house with all these questions and papers, and it caused her to be angry, which then turned on me. Native tradition is: What happens in the house stays in the house. We deal with it. We don't involve outsiders, western culture—anything of that sort.

Charlene admitted that she had often considered turning in her older brother, who had been molesting her for years. "I could have done it a long time ago. It's just that I have a kind heart and he's my brother, and I didn't want him gone," she said. Instead of formally reporting

⁵⁵ On September 12, 2014, *Native Village of Tununak II v. State of Alaska* (Alaska Supreme Court No. 6954) ruled that in order to be considered as an adoptive placement option for children in State custody, petitioners must file formal adoption petitions in the State Superior Court. This new requirement will be an insurmountable hurdle for most families and prevent them from exercising their rights granted under ICWA. The new complexities to the adoption process will necessitate the hiring of an attorney, which the vast majority of Alaska Native families and villages lack access to.

⁵⁶ The word for "trooper," translates in nearly every Native language in Western Alaska as *he who comes and takes away*.

her brother, Charlene issued a firm warning to him when she was in the eighth grade. Interestingly, it was his beginning a romantic relationship with a local girl that prompted Charlene to confront her brother. “I forgot how I said it, but I told him if it ever happened again, I’d turn him in,” she said. Like other women, Charlene’s concern for the welfare of others prompted her take matters into her own hands in confronting her abuser.

Sandra’s decision to resign from SAFE clearly resonates with silence as an instrumental tool in keeping families intact. All village women commented that for most people in villages throughout rural Alaska, this is the place where they were born and raised. This is where their family is from and has lived for generations. Families are large and, as mentioned previously, extended family bonds are close. Women had anywhere from two to 12 siblings, up to 40 plus first cousins, and even more second and third cousins—all living in the same village. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the biggest challenges of social life in the villages is that such environments breed gossip and innuendo. Considering such contexts, Sandra’s reluctance to report and subsequent resignation are not only indicative of wanting to maintain family unity, but also the realization that implicating her grandson would inevitably become a public matter in her village. Her current predicament involving ongoing sexual harassment by her work supervisor evoked similar reasons for non-disclosure. “I want to tell his wife to talk to him, but his wife is my first cousin,” she explained. “I don’t want to break their marriage or get into trouble for those things.” Sandra’s concern of disrupting the harmony and status quo of village life with her individual struggles was another theme explaining non-disclosure of violence.

Sustainability and Security

Women also discussed the role of silence in maintaining not only family unity, but also sustainability, longevity, and harmony within families and communities. As women bemoaned

the high cost of living, limited resources, and unforgiving physical intensity associated with rural Alaska living, I found that silence about sexual violence was often framed as instrumental in protecting one's ability to stay in the community⁵⁷.

When Carrie told her mother about the manager of the grocery store (this was the only grocery store at the time in the village) sexually abusing her, her mother's reply was "You better not go to the cops. If you do, they won't let us go to that store anymore." Debbie spoke of a female co-worker, whose husband had been recently accused of molesting the grandchildren:

As smart as she appears to be, she's so dense...why doesn't she take her grandchild's side? What is wrong with this picture? But it made me realize she was worried about her own security because she went into this huge frenzy—"How am I going to get to work? Who's going to chop wood for me? Who's going to get furs? Who is going to make money to pay our bills?"

Terry recalled one incident involving her father "making a move" on her when he was intoxicated. Fearing that his pension would be terminated in the event of an arrest, Terry's mother advised her not to pursue with legal allegations. Again, financial considerations largely factor into the decision to speak out or remain silent:

It's a lot of pride—"Don't tell! Don't tell! Don't tell!" It's been instilled in us. Even in my generation when I did tell my mom about my dad, it was "don't tell—he'll go to jail." And I had to live with that. That's what they were taught: "Don't tell because it will affect us."

The desire to maintain harmony and balance within the family (or least maintaining the façade of such) was also discussed as a mechanism supporting silence on abusive experiences.

⁵⁷ *Ginger: People will put up with a lot of shit in relationships because it's better than being single. I have talked to my mental health colleagues and their immediate thoughts on that are the neediness of women, the self-esteem issues, and [relate that] to why they would get into a bad relationship and stay. And that may all be true, but everybody just seems to leap over the obvious one: you can't fuckin' survive as a single person, let alone a single parent, on one income in rural Alaska. You can't do it. If you don't have a partner, you can't live here. It's not like there is a big gene pool to pick from. She is making the best pick she can for her survival if she wants to stay in the village. She'd rather have a bad man who cuts the wood, hauls the water, and pops the moose, than no man at all. There's many women I know that if they were going to speak out against their perps, they had to leave the village. So the choice is: rape, stay and shut up; or prosecute the person. If they win, they lose; if they lose, they lose.*

Unlike the former examples which support silence as instrumental in warding off external sources of familial strain (e.g. police, troopers, social workers, etc.), certain explanations of silence appeared to underpin the necessity for internal family cohesion and maintain indigeneity. These explanations often emerged when women discussed disciplinary measures in their homes during childhood. Women characterizing their childhoods as abusive (whether witnessing parental domestic violence or experiencing personal physical or sexual abuse) usually explicitly noted that yelling, screaming, or hollering accompanied that abuse. Tamara's only memories of visiting her mother during childhood consisted of "the abuse, the hollering, the blackout." Marcy stated that she becomes incredibly nervous whenever she hears a door slamming or someone hollering having been conditioned in the Pavlovian tradition to associate yelling and loudness with trauma, violence, and abuse. When women spoke about yelling, hollering, screaming, I was quick to dismiss this, initially, as non-telling, normal, and even unimportant. Obviously, no child likes to be yelled at, so why should an Alaska Native child be any different?

Interestingly, while loudness often entered discourses of abuse and violence during childhood, they did not enter into conversations of discipline and child-rearing. When discussing their childhood years, it was not uncommon to hear "I was raised quiet." Likewise, in discussing how discipline was handled in the household, it was also not uncommon for women to describe child-rearing as rather non-punitive and non-authoritarian. Households generally were not characterized by rigid rules and Draconian parental control, but rather by a mutual dialogue between children and caregivers. This dialogue largely consisted of learning by example. Diane recalled an incident with her toddler son, who had started choking one afternoon:

I was a young mother and I freaked out. I was crying and I didn't know what to do. My aunt looked at me and said "Diane, when something bad like that happens, don't freak out!" It works—not to freak out when something stressful happens, like your child choking or bleeding. Kids are going to get hurt. My son found a

pipe when he was three and fell into that pipe and got his forehead all bloody. It was scary! But I didn't freak out. I didn't want him to freak out.

While it is tempting to equate quietness with submissiveness and non-fugitiveness with lax parenting, cultural contexts must be considered. Traditional Native American parenting styles advocate that adults avoid shouting at children. Autonomy is highly valued, and children are expected to make their own decisions and to operate semi-independently at an early age (Mosier, 2001). Ginny described how discipline was taught to her by her grandparents and village elders via compassionate communication, as opposed to harsh scolding. Ginny emphasized that patience, self-discipline, and respect for others were core values in her disciplinary experiences, as opposed to repetitive yelling and "screaming in the heat of the moment."

The Yup'ik people (and Alaska Natives more generally) strongly admonish against yelling and shouting at children out of anger. In fact, Native elders have warned that "a child who has been yelled at becomes strong willed and even more disobedient" (Martin, 2001; as quoted in Fienup-Riordan, 2005, p. 128). Given the apparent cultural predisposition to quietness, it is not surprising that situations with potential for loudness, hollering, and yelling would be avoided. When asked why Tina wouldn't report her older cousins who had been molesting her and her sisters for years, she simply replied: "We were scared to tell. I didn't want anyone to yell. I didn't want my cousins to get yelled at."

Equally emphasized in keeping quiet about victimization was the desire to maintain acceptance in the community. Most women evaluated the people of their respective communities to be quite judgmental, skeptical, and/or uncomfortable with claims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Sensing that the people of her village church were becoming uncomfortable with her stories of an abusive husband and subsequent divorce, Alice gradually retreated back to silence:

I still go to church—there have been people that have listened to my story and strayed away from my church, so I made a point not to talk about it anymore. I didn't want anyone to leave because of what happened to me.

Terry also discussed how her relations with her peers in substance abuse treatment hindered her ability to open up and discuss her issues in a non-threatening environment:

I wasn't able to open up in rehab because everyone knew me. I considered going somewhere else for rehab where I wouldn't know any one.

As noted in Chapter 4, women's sense of place is rooted in an inter-connectedness involving relationships with people, relationships with nature, relationships with higher powers, and relationships with culture. Because of this interconnectedness, speaking out against a perpetrator or an act of victimization sends ripple effects throughout one's community. Nothing occurs in isolation. For many women, disclosure results in social, spiritual, and physical displacement. For example, Claire and Terry discussed displacement in terms of severed, perhaps irreparable, family ties. Their disclosures resulted in arrests and formal criminal justice processing of family members. In essence, Claire's and Terry's actions were betrayals to the family unit. After Alice was assaulted by her aunt's husband, she described the profound distance this created between her and her aunt:

They were the ones that took care of me. I went there and called it home; I stayed over there more than I stayed at my apartment. And I helped around the house and she trusted me to be there when she was out of town because she wanted me to watch him so he doesn't mess around with anyone. So I would—I would go stay there and it was ok. Nothing like that ever happened, until then. And I finally went over there just the other day after that happened—but I feel just as responsible, in a way, because I could have at least hollered for help but I didn't. I just stayed quiet and let it happen. She knew about it so I went up to her and apologized, and it really ruined our friendship. She was pretty much more like my mom than my mom was.

Women also described the potential for physical displacement as a result of disclosure. Because SAFE is the only shelter in all of Bristol Bay, women in need of safety and shelter must

leave their village in order to protect themselves and their children. In this vein, disclosing incidents poses a risk of removal from the community. To take women out of that place, essentially, is much more than relocating; it is redefining. As Charlene reflected on her experiences with abuse, neglect and addiction in Angler Gulch, she acknowledged that although the source of most of her trauma lies within that village, she still harnesses personal strength and security from that village. In weighing the pros and cons between living in her village versus living in Dillingham (Charlene was living at SAFE at the time as she completed outpatient alcohol addiction treatment), Charlene maintained that she feels more at ease in her village:

It's like I want to be in Stu, but I don't want to be in Stu because a lot of people that touched me are there. I can say pretty much the same for Dillingham and Stu. For some odd reason, I feel more safe at home than I do here in town.

CONCLUSION

The responses that women have received as a result of their victimization, whether from their families, their communities, or institutional social controls, paint a bleak picture for survivors of violence. Women often do not disclose incidents of violence and when they do, their stories are met with skepticism, criticism, and even aggression. And yet, with the struggles they have faced, the women I came to know (and some, befriend) are not broken. As a student of criminology, I was initially interested in the experiences of victimized women—from their physical victimization to everything that followed. However, as discourses of resilience and recovery inevitably worked their ways into conversations, I also became interested in how women maintained humanity and identity, in spite of overwhelming odds. In Chapter 8, I focus on how women have moved beyond their collective traumas, finding absolution, forgiveness, and even purpose from these experiences.

CHAPTER 8: I'M LETTING THAT GO: HEALING, RECOVERY, AND NOTIONS OF JUSTICE

EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Almost effortlessly, victimization generates feelings of despair, anger, emptiness, and displacement. These emotions derive from the violent episodes themselves, but more often, they are the product of the grueling aftermath of the incident. I found this to be equally true of women that came forward with their abuse, whether to family or law enforcement, as well as those that vowed themselves to silence. I also found these emotions to be largely time-invariant; whether one's personal trauma was weeks ago or decades ago, the way in which women discussed their emotions was consistent. Brenda, who overcame her addiction to alcohol (25 years sober and counting) and is married to a supportive, loving husband, insisted that the trauma lingers. She implicated the pervasive silence on victimization as the primary detriment to women's wellness. "It ruins women's lives and we have these big holes in us because we don't tell for years and years and years," she said. Debbie, also a veteran of sobriety and in a supporting and fulfilling marriage, echoed Brenda's sentiment. "I don't think I'll ever be healed, but at least I'll be able to stand up and say 'I never forgot,'" she said. "Because it's still here. It's like a permanent picture in my brain." Younger women, too, felt the pains of lingering trauma and described how it has impacted their day-to-day lives. Violet explained how her experiences (both with violence and the aftermath) have reinforced an "everyone for themselves" mentality within her:

When I go to the store, I look behind my shoulders, check to make sure I can enter the store, and I constantly have that hesitation because I know the police department is not going to protect me. I don't even bother calling them anymore because it's better to handle it on my own. The court system isn't going to help me unless they're going to make money off it somehow.

Not surprisingly, many women spoke with anger and outrage when discussing their abusers and reflecting on their personal and intimate violation. Violet spoke with great

resentment as she reflected on the men who raped her, her former friend who blamed her, and a law enforcement system that does not protect its community. Similarly, Marcy described the hatred she held for a first cousin that raped her as a teenager:

For a while, I wished that guy would die. I don't ever want to see him. I wished he was dead. And today he is dead—he drowned 20 years ago. And I was happy for that asshole to be dead. Even though he's my first cousin, I was proud. I hated that person. *Hated* him.

Others spoke with a certain despair as they reflected on these experiences, observing that the experience of violence in a community like this is not an individual experience alone. As such, Ginny noted how violence impacts her functioning at a meta-physical level. “It hurts a human's spirit--spiritually and mentally it hurts,” she explained. “Not just that person, but the whole family, also.”

To deal with this albatross, some women turned to dysfunctional coping strategies, namely alcohol abuse, but also drug abuse, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, and tension-reducing behaviors, such as eating disorders, self-mutilation, and engagement in risky sexual behaviors. Women that engaged in such behaviors explained how these negative coping strategies inevitably heightened vulnerability to subsequent victimization, thus creating an insidious cycle of abuse. Tamara framed her gold standard method of coping with sexual assault (alcohol use) as potentiating a snowball effect of greater and more severe problems:

From a black out, the first thing for me, I always still felt drunk. My head is still spinning. I'm going “Where the F am I?” And you can feel your head pounding, but you still feel drunk because that's how much I drank. I drank in excess to almost poisoning myself. So my brain is still wet when I wake up. And just the realization and the looking around and wondering and the fear—it's overwhelming. Usually when I feel that way, I'll purposely look for something alcoholic to drink to ease that fear and numb it out. It's scary. The black out alone brought enough guilt and shame and then having to deal with the fact that you ended up with a creep—that made it a lot worse. I think that contributed a lot to the alcoholism—a snowballing effect. Trying to numb out everything you did

from the night before and every time you numbed out, something worse happened. It was a big snowball.

The literature on sexual assault, domestic violence, and child sexual abuse has identified a host of negative psychological and physical sequelae suffered by victims, including post-traumatic stress, depression, panic disorder, suicidality, and somatic symptoms (Koss, 1993). These myriad effects are often mediated by victims' level of a social and emotional support, with pro-socially supported women reporting improved mental and physical health outcomes and negatively-supported women reporting delayed recovery and exacerbation of symptomatology (Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco, & Barnes, 2001). In this study, women experienced most of these mental and physical health outcomes, with varied intensity and duration. I focus on three effects, in particular, which seem to have caused the greatest disturbance in women's lives. These included the effect of isolation, reliving traumatic memories through encountering perpetrators in the community, and difficulties maintaining romantic and familial relationships.

Isolation

The torments of physical, social, and spiritual isolation were apparent across several women as they dealt with the turmoil of abuse and addiction. Isolation varied largely in both form and function, including physical seclusion, alienation from friends and family, and spiritual/cultural displacement. "I don't go anywhere like I used to anymore, I just stay home and do my crafts," said Sandra. "There are nice people in Dillingham and people that do care," Diane explained. "But now, I keep myself more protected because some of the things I have been through. So, I'm less trusting of people, men in particular." Alice explained that she regularly isolated herself from others since childhood, situating her reclusive nature as a means to cope with her unhappy upbringing and being surrounded by alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Today, Alice still struggles with these social ills in HUD:

I go back and forth into isolation. There will be people that I would lean on here in Dillingham—I don't even talk to them anymore. Even when I go to visit my parents, I don't go anywhere. I don't go to see anyone.

Even women making active attempts to better themselves experienced alienation from their families and communities. As discussed in Chapter 7, women seeking either informal or formal resolution for their victimization encountered familial, community, and organizational backlash. Women attempting sobriety encountered similar isolating circumstances. Ironically, while most women's drinking progressively alienated them from friends and family, the decision to stop sometimes had the same effect. For these women, social support for sobriety was virtually absent. In short, they were damned if they did, damned if they didn't. Shortly after Terry was raped by her nephew, she decided to quit drinking. She explained how her choice has created somewhat of a distance between her and her son, primarily driven by the alcohol-genic nature of her social circle and the broader community:

What is there to do? I call up some people and "oh yeah let's go for a boat ride. We have to stop at the liquor store first. Let's go hiking. We got to get jug first." We won't even remember the view! Even the friends I have here, all of them are alcoholics. Or drug users, which I won't do. I'm too old for that. But I have in the past. It's a powerful thing in this town. What happened to me—it definitely took a toll on my relationship with my son. Because I hid myself away for a long time without participating in group activities with him—like basketball games and even Beaver Roundup. I haven't done anything because everything includes the bars, it seems.

Brenda's decision to abstain from alcohol initially created a rift between her and her peers, who viewed her as somewhat pretentious for going against the grain of social life:

I don't want to ever forget where I came from. I don't want to ever dote on myself, because I'm here and my next family member is not. When I first started going through sobriety, they called me 'holier than thou.' I don't want that.

Nancy also discussed how her decision to achieve sobriety was understood by her peers as an elitist act. She described how her abstinence from alcohol created tension within her social circle:

I'm not trying to be better than anybody else; I'm just trying to live. After I gave up drinking and partying, my friends say "you think you're better than me!" and I say "No, I'm weaker. I can't do that anymore." It would be very easy to, but I just can't.

Am I going to see that asshole?

A common consequence of non-disclosure discussed by many women was encountering their perpetrators in their daily movements in the community. Because of the physical isolation and tight-knittedness of the Bristol Bay communities, the odds of running into one's perpetrator or abuser is not a matter of chance. It's a certainty. Violet expressed a great deal of anxiety in dealing with the fact that she not only may encounter the three men that raped her in the community on any given day, but also that she works with her former best friend that shifted the blame onto Violet. This is only further aggravated by the fact that her former best friend and one of her perpetrators are now in a romantic relationship:

I have to see Judy every day at [work] and her stupid boyfriend comes in here and acts like he's so Goddamned innocent like he never did anything. And for Judy to act like he didn't do anything to me hurts me so much more. Every time I see her walk through that front door, I hear "You deserved it." And when I see them, I just want to puke. I want to go up to them and choke them and tell them how much they hurt me. How could somebody that told you they were your friend hurt you like that? Every time I would see Maxwell, Charlie or Alfred, I would hurt inside, but I didn't know why. My body would hurt but I didn't know why. Every time I would see them, my whole body would ache and I would get so angry.

Physical health and illness were commonly evoked as symptomology of trauma. Like Violet, Debbie also described that physical agony that accompanies her encounters with Seymour:

I've seen him all my life. I like when I can go for years without seeing him, because all that stuff dissipates. And when I see him and it's like—that night I'll have a nightmare about him and I can't run from him and he's got me trapped under his old boat, and I can't move and I'm grossing out. What's all this nasty stuff all over me? It just brings that "Yuck!" It just comes like one day Tom and I were pulling our boat out of the bay for the winter. I was busy doing stuff and minding my own business and I heard this big "Brrrr" and here's Seymour getting pulled out and he was standing on his fly bridge. I took one look at him and I was so sick. I ran outside and I just threw up and heaved for a couple of hours. It made me so sick.

Diane was in an emotionally and sexually abusive relationship with one man whose controlling and manipulative nature secluded her from the rest of her family. Shortly after ending that relationship, he began to spread rumors about Diane, accusing her of having affairs with other men in the community, as well as molesting her own children. She explained that even though eight years have passed since that relationship ended, she still continues to isolate herself, in fear of encountering him when he is town. She explained how this isolation impacted both her physical and mental health:

He used to live here. When he comes, he has his family here. All the mean shit he said, all the accusations he made. Made it seem like I was a freak or a monster. Who the fuck does that? It took me a long time not to be so angry and now I'm angry all over again. So I guess my anger towards him is still somewhere. So the physical health—that's why I don't get out and walk and be active and all of that. My physical health probably isn't so great because I could be doing more active things like going for a walk, but I can't just go for a walk because I have all these things I'm thinking about—"Am I going to see that asshole?" I keep my house locked when I know he's in town. I don't know if he's gonna come barging into my house or come in and be as an asshole. As strong as I am, I am still afraid of him, even though I shouldn't be. I try not to do anything that will have me cross paths with that one person.

Relationships

Women spoke at length on how their experiences impacted their interpersonal relationships, both with romantic partners and their families. Many women's confidence in people has been shaken as a result of these harrowing experiences, and many described an inability to identify and maintain healthy relationships. Debbie, for example, developed an

addiction to alcohol at age 14, which she attributed to her early childhood experiences. She explained how these early experiences combined with her alcoholism blunted her understanding of healthy relationships, which she later attributed to her experiences with domestic violence in adulthood:

I became an alcoholic at a really young age, I started smoking pot and cigarettes really young. I just had this yucky feeling about myself; I had no self-esteem. Those yucky feelings that someone took something away from me that was mine to share with someone special. I would have to be really drunk before I would go to bed with anybody. I'd have to be in blackout stage. I don't know why—it's just from all the stuff. I had a real problem with that, and I was not into healthy good relationships.

Carrie discussed how her childhood victimization shaped her early sexual awakening, causing her to “act out” at an early age:

It affected my life by my relationship with God. It affected me by being untrustworthy, unfaithful, not being honest, not being loyal. I wanted to be more sexually involved with these other men. Because of my childhood. and becoming rebellious growing up, I had hard time trusting, had hard time being faithful in a monogamous relationship, always wanting to feel that intercourse every day, wanting to experience the many foreplays of sexual intercourse, wanting to create a reputation where any guy would want me.

Terry also mentioned how her experiences contributed to her engagement in risky sexual activities, as well as mistrust and hatred toward men:

It also created a lot of anger, a lot of really bad insecurities—hate towards men; my relationship didn't last after that. I had affairs while under the influence of alcohol, which is horrifying. So now I'm totally single and haven't had a relationship for over a year. Maybe more. Just to get my self-respect back. It's been a long process.

Though Debbie has been in a healthy and non-abusive marriage for the past 17 years, she explained that the memories of her abuse still hinder her ability to engage in intimacy with her husband:

And it's affected my whole life as far as being in relationships. With me and Tom, we really seldomly go there, which is fine with me. I don't know why. I would

rather have him for a companion than a lover. It's really strange how I feel about the whole thing and it bothers me. It makes it hard for me to make love to him because of the memory maybe. But he's nice enough to hold me and cuddle me and sometimes that's all I need, and that stuff will go away. But it's made relationships really different than what they could be, I'm sure. Like some girls will say "ohh we made love last night," and I'll sit there wondering why it's so difficult for me to describe something like that? But then I think my thoughts were warped because of what happened.

Eva emphasized how her experiences (all with abusers who were related to her)

significantly impacted her ability to trust her family. She emphasized many times that "you shouldn't have to worry about that," demonstrating that some women have not accepted these experiences as normal and demand that things begin to change in their communities:

I couldn't even trust my own family. You shouldn't have to worry about your family! I wasn't even comfortable with being alone with my guy family, unless they were my brothers or grandpas. They were the only ones I was comfortable around. I wasn't even comfortable around my mom's husband or my uncles. I wasn't comfortable with my own cousins either. You shouldn't have to worry about that. I hate that I had to deal with it, but I'm glad I got him out of our community. He's never going to be able to get rid of it now. It messed my trust up with a lot of people for the longest time. You really shouldn't have to worry about being around your family. Your family is supposed to protect you.

TALK NOW, TALK OFTEN, TALK FOREVER: BREAKING SILENCE AND REBUILDING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

As discussed in Chapter 7, there are any number of reasons that inform women's decision to remain silent about past or ongoing abuse, physical or sexual. Fear of the perpetrator or perpetrator's family, skepticism or blame from one's do is wrong. They family or community, and negative previous experiences with the criminal justice system are just a few reasons women hold these experiences in secrecy. I wish to emphasize now that I do not believe that silence is a traditional, indigenous way of life. In fact, Yup'ik elders have warned about the dangers of "holding in" bad experiences and the powerful healing that takes place when people do reveal these experiences (Fienup-Riordan, 2005). Maddy shed a bit of light on this as well, postulating that silence, in general, must be a relatively recent

habit among indigenous peoples. When discussing modern approaches to disciplining children, Maddy observed that today's expectations of children are completely out of touch with traditional cultural expectations:

It's not like now where we expect children to do things like sit still in be quiet. In an indigenous culture, when would you make it a big point to sit still and be quiet? Your ceremonial things would have been with singing and dancing; there would have been movement and noise.

Despite the pervasiveness of non-disclosure among the taciturn women, every single one acknowledged the urgency of breaking this silence. They all acknowledged that violence against women, particularly sexual violence, thrives in an environment shrouded in secrecy. Terry expressed the urgency of all victims to come forward with their stories, if for nothing more than to release them. She explained the extent to which silence scarred her, insisting that today's youth must be educated better than she was on sexual abuse:

It needs to be enforced for sexually abused people to come forward, no matter what age, and say "this did happen to me." And quit ignoring it. I would have been so messed up if I didn't talk. I might have committed suicide. Or even hunted him down and killed him myself.

Likewise, Marcy described the profound sense of liberation she acquired after she began to come forward with her stories of abuse:

Talk now, talk often, talk forever. I know it would do them good because they'll be happy for what they have done. I guess I'm speaking for myself, because I know I was happy.

In her village, Debbie has observed some positive steps toward acknowledgement of this social ill. Like other women, she discussed the importance of awareness for the purpose of teaching today's youth about safety:

But now, I see more conversation going on, and a lot of times, I'll bring it up because I know there's some people that are still hurting. They're still holding it inside and its making them sick. When people say they're sick, I'll say "Are you

not saying something you need to be telling someone?” Because that’s what was happening to me. I think I was holding in all that stuff—I could have been a better mother, a better wife. Now all I can say is that I’ll be a better grandmother because I’m more aware of that stuff.

Ginny has also observed more dialogue in her village on both alcohol abuse and sexual abuse. Though she still maintains that conversations of sex and sexuality are considered somewhat taboo topics in her village, she believes that the village has become more open-minded in discussing the abusive side of these topics:

It was never an open subject. It only was spoken when they were to be wed; the eve of the wedding. It’s like alcohol—I was never educated. That’s why there’s so much abuse with alcohol in Alaska. Same thing with sex. It’s slowly coming out; it’s slowly being recognized.

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, sexual abuse and the silence surrounding it were often presented as family traditions almost effortlessly passed down generation to generation. Some women spoke of not only the need to break their silence or their family and friends’ silence, but putting an end to the intergenerational cycle of silence. Now that his grandparents have passed on, Debbie is ready to come forward on her experiences with Seymour in hopes of leveling charges of child sexual abuse against him. What primarily drives Debbie is not necessarily a punitive mindset seeking legal redress and imprisonment, but rather ending the cycle of abuse in hopes of sparing the children of Seymour’s family tree, who Debbie suspects are at risk:

I think the time has come for me. [His] grandpa and grandma have died, so they won’t have to go through the hurt. I want my day to say “you hurt me.” Now I have no excuse not to get up and tell on Seymour. He needs to be told on. He really does. I was reading the Bristol Bay Times and I read that now his children are doing it to their own children. There’s something wrong; that’s not normal.

Eva also identified speaking out as the first step toward prevention. Reflecting on her own fears of being judged and blamed by her family and community, Eva empathized with other victims’ proclivity toward non-disclosure. And like most other women, Eva

believes the most important benefit of community standing together against violence against women and children is the effect this will have on the children of her village:

I think a good thing would be for people to be able to talk about it. That's the first thing. No one talks about these kinds of problems. They just try to hide them. If people become more vocal about it, it wouldn't happen in the first place. They would see that kind of behavior is not accepted in the community. If they saw the consequences, I feel there wouldn't be any more. Well, I guess it's been around for a long time, but I think if the community takes a stand as a whole against rape and sexual assault, I feel it wouldn't happen. It's a small community and they are tolerating it right now—just accepting that it's going on in the community. I don't think its ok for the kids to see, because they are just going to accept it as well. We need to take away the stigma of talking about rape, because I'm sure they are all afraid to talk about it. They'll be embarrassed or judged by the community. I had that same fear. But the more I talked, the less I was worried. Just talking was helping. I think that is the first thing that needs to be done in Drifter Sound. To get the community to open up about this kind of violence because they are just tolerating it right now. That's not good for the younger generation to see.

ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: BOTTOM-UP STRATEGIES IN ANTI-ABUSE EFFORTS

By and large, the physical space of women's communities was described as an aggravating factor to their trauma. Discussion of the physical geography and climate of Bristol Bay, alone, was enough to ignite memories of personal trauma and loss. Marcy lost her daughter, Joan, in a tragic accident several winters ago. Late one evening, Joan left the local bar after a night of heavy drinking. She mounted her snow mobile and headed home, cutting across the tundra, presumably to shave some time off her journey. The snow had been falling heavily all day and by the time Joan was en route, a full scale blizzard was slamming the community. What exactly happened to Joan once she left the bar, no one can be sure. The going theory is that the blizzard was too strong, blinding Joan's vision and disorienting her (the alcohol couldn't have helped matters), and she froze to death. Accidental injury and death are part and parcel of living in Bristol Bay; simply put, if you don't keep your wits about you, you're asking for trouble. Such

was the case in Eastwind Bay with the three hunters who perished on their return home, according to Ginny. “It probably could have been prevented,” she said. “It was too windy and they weren’t wearing life jackets.”

Additionally, the tight-knittedness and density of acquaintanceship of communities was often framed as a barrier to disclosure of abuse, as well as an agitator of alcohol and substance abuse. For Alice, living in HUD, which she characterized as tight-knit and virtually lacking anonymity, fueled her alcohol addiction. Her only resource for abstaining from drinking is, in fact, to leave that community. For Nancy, being surrounded by her husband’s extended family was a major obstacle to seeking help in her chronically abusive marriage. “There were 11 kids in his family alone,” Nancy explained. “And his mom and dad never did anything to stop it.” Likewise, the isolated nature of communities was often linked to the lack of social services and interventions. For Debbie and Sandra, living in a village without a SAFE advocate was particularly troublesome and both are inclined to believe that the silence surrounding sexual abuse and domestic violence thrives for this exact reason. Yet, despite the problems associated with the physical, social, and cultural space of communities, some women explained how their place in the community has allowed them to initiate their own movements for social change.

“I like that the community is so small that one person *can* make a difference,” said Maddy on the strengths of her community. Generally, women demonstrated a sharp awareness of the limitations of legal remedies to temper the plight of victims of violence in their communities. In addition, they also recognized that the uniqueness of their physical and cultural space also presents a challenge in addressing these issues. Notwithstanding these myriad barriers, some women have begun to mount their own small social justice movements within their communities to remedy issues of abuse, neglect, and addiction. Often, these bottom-up movements

demonstrated a multiplier effect whereby the benefits of one woman's actions spread to multiple others at risk. In acknowledging some of the challenges associated with rural Alaska and the lack of reprieve for rural women and children in crisis, Debbie has begun to spearhead her own public safety movement in her village through offering her home as a safe haven for children:

One of the reasons could be because we're way out in the rural areas—we're not out in the city, but then again, it does happen in the city. Because we're way out here and don't really have....well there's a SAFE in Dillingham, but maybe having a SAFE in each village? I'm a volunteer SAFE home up there. I don't like to say anything, but I do it for family, because it's my own family I'm having to bring into my home to keep safe from other family members until they sober up. It's usually one night; it's not for days. It's usually for one night and then when you go check on them and the family is ok, you can go home with your baby.

Like Debbie, Sandra also recognizes the need for increased social service presence in her village. Though Sandra commented on the difficulty in maintaining advocacy positions in the village due to the dense network of familial ties and that, like VPSOs, advocates would likely exercise similar discretion in terms of how to handle certain incidents (especially when family is involved), she still acknowledges the profound effect that the absence of advocacy services has had on village families. Sandra discussed that although she no longer works as a victim advocate, she provides emotional support to women and families in crisis. Though this may seem like a meager gesture, recall from Chapter 7 that profound dearth of social support that women receive from their families and communities. Given that victims of violence are at particular risk of experiencing blame, shame and aggression because of their victimization, the act of merely offering support is monumental in a village setting:

They should start a SAFE advocate in Ironside. A lot of women or family I see—their face is sad. Not like it how used to be—healthy, normal, happy. They're not like that. They're sad and they say "I want to cry." Lately I've been seeing them and they'll give me a hug. They want to talk to me but I'm not a SAFE advocate anymore. But I say "Go ahead and cry—let it out."

Though Tamara emphasized that she has been keeping a “low profile” in the community while she focuses on maintaining her sobriety, even she has found purpose and empowerment in helping others facing similar challenges. Through Alcoholics Anonymous, she described her encounter with a young Native man⁵⁸ who confided in Tamara his own sexual victimization. Interestingly, though Tamara repeatedly spoke in a self-blaming manner on her own experiences with sexual assault (“I shouldn’t have been drinking,” “I blame myself for those instances,” etc.), she described the one-on-one informal advocacy as non-judgmental and non-accusatory:

They face a lot more shame because I noticed in Dillingham in the Yup’ik culture, the men are tough. They go out and fish on the boat, they go out and shoot the moose, and they get the deer or shoot all the ducks and bring the meat home. Men are tough and don’t cry. Well, all this drinking and stuff in the villages—there’s as much male victims as women. It’s really sad. Last year—I have lots of friends in all the villages. I was at an AA meeting and this young boy I’ve known all my life from Ironside—we’re sitting in AA. A lot of people know me in this town. They know me as a drunk. They know me as a sober person. They know me as an educated person. They know me as a HUD person. So my reputation gets around. But this young man needed a little more support. And since [I] don’t take no shit from nobody, he liked to sit by me in AA. I don’t know if it gave him confidence. I was just so appalled for as long as I’ve known him that when he opened up about being sexually raped by a man at a house party. I thought I was going to pass out because that was the first time, for me, that someone has actually come forward. And it was in a meeting. And I didn’t know how to react, but I knew he needed to know it wasn’t his fault. So after that, he’d call and we’d talk.

Eva represents one of the few success stories in terms of finding justice in a broken system and slowly improving her emotional and spiritual health. She explained that one the crucial catalysts to initiating formal charges against her perpetrator was the realization that other women in the village had already been victimized, indicating to Eva that there would be no end

⁵⁸ Almost all women discussed boys and men who are also suffering from past or ongoing sexual victimization. Some women, like Tamara and Claire, were inclined to believe that men are equally at risk as are women. I was frequently asked if I would be interviewing men as a component of this study. In fact, Debbie had asked a close male friend of hers to participate in the study, but he declined. When I asked Debbie what she believed the reason for his decline to be, she indicated that my own gender may have been a problem. “He probably doesn’t want to feel weak around you,” she said. Though I’m unable to confirm the truthfulness of this, this does show that gender alone does not predict the success of conducting interviews on social problems that are very much rooted in gender).

to this cycle if she didn't speak out. She found her empowerment and strength through the realization that her voice might bring closure to other village women who had been victimized, as well as spare the lives of many others:

In the beginning, I almost regretted reporting him just because I was worried about the after-effects of reporting him. I was so worried about that. But then I was thinking about it the other day and realized I would have regretted it even more now if I hadn't gone through with reporting. If I waited, it would have been harder to prove that it happened, and he would still be in my community and ruining all these—I'm pretty sure he has done it to more than just those two before me, because one of them kind of gave a hint that he did it before her, too. I know I would have regretted it even more, because he would still be a free man and still be walking around like he didn't do anything wrong. The one thing that pushed me was finding out that he did that to two other women—two of our other cousins. That was the biggest motivator for me, because he ruined enough lives before me and I felt like I was doing it for them too.

NOT OUR ENEMIES: VISIONS OF JUSTICE

Generally speaking, crimes of violence (particularly sex offenses) against women and children usually evince feelings of revulsion, vilification, and non-redemption. The public's perception of sex offenders is largely the product of moral panic (Jenkins, 1998), fueled by mass media, politicians, and other socially-accredited "experts," as well as a substantial body of early scholarship that hastily claimed virtually no positive effects of treatment for sex offenders (e.g. Hall, 1995). As such, a consistent finding in empirical work has been that the public endorses a fairly punitive attitude towards sex offenders (e.g. Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007). In this study, there were some women that aligned themselves with this dominant view. "They should be locked up the key thrown away," said Violet decisively. "They did it to one, they'll likely do it to another." Charlene also identified incarceration as the ideal method of handling perpetrators of sexual violence. Tamara also endorsed the carceral strategy, although not with the same degree of salience as Violet and Charlene. She acknowledged that although resources do exist for offenders, she wasn't entirely certain of their ability to effect change:

I definitely think they should be held accountable. What they need to go to jail, they need to get help—whatever it is they need. It's not ok. It's not ok because if they've done that to me, there's no telling who else they've done that to. I don't even know if there's help. I don't even know if they're just stuck like that. Maybe they need to be educated because they're so messed up themselves? Maybe they don't even know it's wrong! Maybe that's just what they're used to so they think it's ok. Nowadays, I know they have sex offender classes and stuff—make them do that. They can't just be running around doing this. If they do it to one, they'll do it to others.

The majority of women, however, did not explicitly identify incarceration as an ideal strategy for containing the threat of violent offenders in the community. A number of additional women did indeed state that jail time was a necessary, but not sufficient, strategy for remedying the plight of traumatized women.

Quite often, I found that women's initial responses to the question "how should people like this (i.e. perpetrators of violence) be handled?" usually evoked visions of a rehabilitative/treatment model. The focus was not on guilt and punishment, but how to actually solve the problem. When I probed on whether jail or prison time was also necessary, some women conceded that incarceration, *for a period of time*, is warranted in some situations, but still maintained that true change could not be accomplished by incarceration alone. "I would think they would need to get some sort of treatment. In some cases, yeah, they do need to go to jail," said Diane. Ginny, for instance, emphasized that incarceration must be accompanied by some form of counseling or treatment:

JEREMY: Do you think we have to put [offenders] in jail?

GINNY: Oh yes. Yeah for something they did. But not throw them in there, but give them some kind of counseling or something. SOMETHING. Everybody deserves a person that will care for them—that will care about them. Maybe that will help them change their mind. Maybe that will help them to try and live a better life. Everybody deserves at least love. If everybody loved and showed love and shared love, showed kindness, shared kindness, maybe the whole world wouldn't be so messed up like it is now.

Some women explicitly admonished against a criminal justice system predicated on a “lock em up” approach. “Ideally, I think they’re confronted and counseled,” advised Maddy. “I don’t think imprisonment helps. I could see banning contact with people who are potential victims, but I don’t think imprisonment helps.” Maddy made it clear that the pitting society against perpetrators, ergo reinforcing the adversarial justice system, is doomed to failure. As stated in Chapter 7, many women did not disclose abusive incidents for concern of the family unit being broken apart. Maddy explained how the current criminal justice system in Bristol Bay, largely retributive in form, presents another barrier that obstructs victims’ quest for justice:

I think that perpetrators are not the enemy—they are our uncles, our cousins, our fathers. Our family and friends are also our perpetrators. If the goal is to punish them, I don’t think people are going to come out. Because the person who does the punishing gets blamed. When you’re the victim who speaks out and you’re seen as the punisher, you’re going to get the blame. Right now, there’s a lot of talk about the heroin use in our community. As long as the emphasis is on punishing people that are selling—no one wants to turn in their son or brother for punishment. They would turn them in if they had hope for help, but not punishment.

As discussed in Chapter 7, many women’s sense of place in the community is heavily embedded in decisions to remain silent about personal trauma and victimization. The decision to disclose runs the risk of physical, social, and/or cultural displacement. In weighing the costs and benefits associated with reporting abusive situations, many women opt to remain silent. Nancy expounded upon this decision-making, pointing to the impact that incarceration creates for Bristol Bay families. Nancy’s analysis of these impacts may inform how Western models of punishment may shape non-disclosure decisions:

The people who committed the violence in my life were people that I loved very deeply. I think they are sick. I think we need to help them understand themselves. They need help. Throwing someone in jail—that’s not going to do it. They aren’t forced to look at themselves; their victims are forced to look at themselves. They should be forced to look and themselves and forced to get better. Us people on the outside (the women)—their husbands and boyfriends sitting in jail. They get three

meals a day, they don't pay rent, they don't pay lights, they don't have to buy their kids anything. And the victims are trying to put a pair of shoes on their kids' feet. I think people that commit these crimes should be forced to improve and support their family. Make them. Everyone says "that costs money." Yeah and in the meantime, they're having everything for free. I see women walking to work with nothing but a sweater on so their kids can have coats and shoes! That's what I think.

Some women commented on people's ability to grow and evolve. They don't view offenders as "fixed," but amenable to change. In reflecting on her own life and some of the questionable choices she had made, Tina concluded that current strategies in managing and containing sex offenders are inadequate and do not acknowledge the protean quality of human behavior:

I see you're supposed to go on a sex offender list. What is that going to do for them? Maybe help them instead of making them out to be some kind of predator. People change. I know I'm sitting here as a changed person. I was a hooker on the streets of Anchorage. They're labeling sex offenders instead of trying to help them. I got here. I don't have to put hooker on my forehead. I don't have to go online and say "Oh, I was once a hooker." People forgave me.

Alice also acknowledged the potential for change in people. When asked what could or should be done with perpetrators of violence, she warily maintained an air of ambiguity, seemingly avoiding discourses of punishment and retribution:

I guess it depends on the person and the extremity of the violence. I mean, there are people that have done it and have changed. But you never know if they're going to do it again, so it goes back and forth with me on that.

Alice's now ex-husband had been arrested for his most recent assault against her. I asked Alice whether she had any involvement throughout any phase of the criminal justice proceedings. Other than being arrested, Alice was unaware of any other case outcomes. For Alice, the criminal justice procedure was of less importance than getting out of the relationship and rebuilding her life:

When the state troopers took him from Nondalton, he was in jail here and he got bailed out and went back to Russian Mission. So I don't really know. I could

check it online, I guess, but I don't know. I didn't want anything to do with him after that. It doesn't matter to me because I finally made the choice to keep him out of my life.

Brenda also implied that the current justice modality in Bristol Bay is likely to continue producing null results, insofar as rehabilitating and treating offenders. Like other women, Brenda demonstrated a degree of skepticism towards rehabilitation for offenders, but insisted that the court system factors predominantly into this predicament:

JEREMY: Is treatment for predators possible?

BRENDA: Seems like that's something in them. Maybe because of what happened to me, I just think they are who they are because it's in them. I don't know if they could be rehabilitated, but maybe they could if they really want to be. But the courts push things on them and they can't be rehabilitated that way. Related to women's general inclination toward a restorative/rehabilitative model of justice was an emphasis on the importance of forgiveness. Numerous women discussed having forgiven their abusers, including those that had suffered long-term, gravely injurious abuse. It is important to note immediately that women did not equate forgiveness with excusable behavior or turning the other cheek. Forgiveness was described largely as an ongoing (and sometimes lifelong) internal monologue in which women are constantly engaged. Debbie described the complexity of forgiveness, emphasizing a perpetual internal negotiation between animosity and absolution:

Forgiveness is really important but people always say "oh all you gotta do is forgive that person!" It's so easy for them to say. How many times have I said "Please God help me forgive this person for what they've done. Take this hate, ugly away from me." And then I'll be just fine, and then when I see him, this nasty, nauseous feeling will come right back.

Tina was unable to recall when she forgave the cousins that had molested her and her sisters for years. She acknowledged that while forgiveness for such an egregious act may appear peculiar, it is important to maintain empathy and minimize the distance between herself and those that have done her harm:

Sooner or later I guess we all forgot. They still come around and we talk like nothing happened. It's strange in my head, but it's normal for me to talk to them and give them a hug. I do a lot of praying, forgiveness—the main thing is that where people come from and what they've been through, we never know. That's why I think differently of my cousins. That's the only reason I'm sitting here talking about this.

Debbie explained that, for her, forgiveness is preferable to harboring ill feelings toward anyone, including those that have done her harm. Shortly after divorcing Debbie's mother, her former step-father, Donnie, remarried shortly after to a friend of Debbie's. Upon finding out that Donnie was diagnosed with leukemia and had a short time left, Debbie visited Donnie one last time. Despite years of sexual abuse by Donnie, Debbie described why she ultimately granted him amnesty:

She [Donnie's wife] invited me over and introduced me to her children and told them I was their big sister and that I was Donnie's daughter. At first I was like "No! Why is she doing this?!" Right after that, I was on my knees. I forgave Donnie. And he died the next day. I guess it was something I had to do; I made my amends so that I wouldn't have hatred toward him. Because there's people today that if they died, I could say "About time—he deserved it!" But I shouldn't be that way because that's an ugly heart.

Marcy explained that her parents instilled forgiveness in her as an important value, and she framed forgiveness in a somewhat compulsory light. She described the impact of forgiving a cousin who attempted to rape her on her and her family:

My niece was very hurt. He went to jail. I grew up with a forgiving mom and dad, so I had to forgive him. I wasn't raped by him; there was just an attempt. So he was scared of me for the longest time. He didn't want to see me because I was one of their good aunts. And it did scare my daughter. She was scared. A couple years later, I bought him a Christmas gift—got him something that would be useful for hunting. Because I know I had to forgive. It would have never happened if there was no alcohol. My niece and her husband cried when I forgave him. My niece called down crying—"thank you so much, Auntie. We thought we lost you."

Ginny eloquently explained how forgiveness has facilitated recovery in her life:

If I never forgave, I would have become bitter. I would have become hateful. I didn't want to practice that because if I do, it would be the same thing towards

everyone else regardless if they're sexual offenders or just because they did something wrong towards me—I didn't want to practice that. That feeling—not liking you, hating him and this and that—I didn't want to practice that in my heart and my soul and my spirit. If I didn't, I would have still had that feeling in me. It would have become such bitterness toward every little thing in life that's ugly or not nice. I probably would react to things in a really mean way, or a bad way. I wish not to practice hate or bitterness every day in my life. Even my ex-husband, we got off on good terms because we're forgiving each other and we're not being ugly. I can't practice that because I don't want my children to know this—practice hate or hating in their daily lives or not liking a person. I mean, you only get to live once. Why not make the best of it with a good heart, with a good life? Make the best day you can with your day. You only get to live once, you don't get to live twice and redo everything. So why not make the best of everything?

Though Brenda did not explicitly state that she forgave her abusers, she did indicate that perpetration of these crimes is not ipso facto a denial of respect and friendship. She explained that though she would be wary of known predators, she could envision herself affording them “levels of trust and respect”:

They'd earn my respect, but like I said there would be a certain boundary. I would respect them for certain things, but would always have a question at the back of my head and I would not leave my kids at their house. I wouldn't be left alone with them. If I had to go over to their house, I'd make sure someone was with me. You can give levels of trust and respect.⁵⁹

What does all this mean? The women presented particularly disturbing narratives laced with graphic depictions of trauma, yet most have maintained that a justice system based solely on punishment and incarceration is not the answer. Some have even forgiven their abusers and have mended relationships with them. Does this mean that women's forgiving and non-punitive nature sends a message that violence against women is acceptable, and this is why we have seen particularly high rates of violence in this community? I'm inclined to think not.

⁵⁹ *Lisa: All the above meshes perfectly with my realization that I don't think of or use “forgive” and “trust” in my thoughts and actions. I consider them diversions for facts and not pertinent to anything. My guess is that circular thinkers (not me) continuously weave them through their lives to feel peace. Which doesn't mean linear thinkers (me) don't feel peace—we just don't use the same concepts to feel it.*

Indigenous communities have long implicated the evisceration of tribal justice modalities, which are predicated on restorative justice, in crime and addiction issues facing these communities (Fienup-Riordan, 2005). Yup'ik elders have contrasted the differences between Yup'ik admonishments, which can change a person's behavior, with *Kass'aq* (or white) laws, which are preoccupied with punishment and minimize the role of reform. Traditional Yup'ik admonishments had consequences, but not in the form of draconian prison sentences and permanent exclusion from the community. For example, social control among the Yup'ik people of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region was primarily a function of large, local bilaterally extended families, which shared responsibility for the behavior of their members (Shinkwin & Pete, 1983). Control over men who might have become aggressive with their wives was an important element of this system of social governance. Men were subject to strict controls exercised by other men in their familial and community spheres and sanctions were imposed for transgressions, including acts of violence against women. Likewise, the threat of excommunication or exile in a region where mutual interdependence on others was indispensable for survival was enough to deter residents from wrong-doing (Morrow, 1993). As Native villages became increasingly modernized, including the importation of Western models of social control, representative government replaced community- and family-based government on a formal level. Social control is now a function of paid (often poorly) officials and a criminal justice system predicated on an adversarial relationship between the perpetrator and victim. Discussions on how to correct a wrong and recalibrate the community have been replaced by technical legal arguments on how to define the wrong that occurred and a pre-occupation with how to appropriately punish the offender, avoiding any conversation of how to restore equilibrium to the community (Ptacin, Worley, & Richotte, 2006). Under this model, according to the Yup'ik

elders, “the only consequence is locking people up, and people continue to repeat their offenses. Young people do not listen anymore because nothing will happen to them. They will be released and behave the same way” (Fienup-Riordan, 2005, pp. 246-247).

FROM BROKEN VICTIMS TO NIETZSCHEAN SURVIVORS: HOW WOMEN HEAL

Undoubtedly, women’s experiences of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse and neglect have left profound physical, psychological, and spiritual scars on them. Histories of addiction and dependence left similar imprinting on women. For some women, these scars have long since healed; for others, the wounds are fresh, and in some cases, septic.⁶⁰ Many women discussed having been on some path to healing and recovery for years, while others identified a series of road blocks that have temporarily delayed them. For Tamara, the journey to recovery is all new terrain. She explained the crossroads she is currently at in her life, having reached six months of sobriety for the first time since she began drinking:

A lot of it is really bad. A lot of it is really sad. I’m 41 years old. My self-esteem is shot. In fact, when I sobered up during the first three days, the hardest thing for me was to look at my husband in the eye and tell him that I didn’t believe I deserved to live. I beat myself up for so many years and just felt like I was thrown around like a ragdoll. And now it’s heavily impacted my anxieties, my self-esteem, my overall worth. I’m trying my best to rebuild that and I don’t even know what that feels like anymore because I’m so used to numbing out all these bad feelings by drinking.

As heart-wrenching and seemingly hopeless as discourses like this appear, many women maintain confidence in their ability to heal and recover. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 6, many women seemed to resist the label of “victim,” which appeared to be linked to notions of moving

⁶⁰ To belabor an important point once again: *when* women experienced trauma and violence did not perfectly align with *how well* into recovery they currently were. For instance, there were women like Brenda and Debbie who considered themselves well into recovery whose violence and addiction issues were also well behind them. However, other women, like Marcy, still struggle immensely with the trauma of rape that occurred over 30 years ago. Meanwhile, women like Eva and Charlene, whose sexual victimization occurred within the past year, expressed difficulty in managing anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Claire, on the other hand, prided herself on her resiliency and ability to bounce back from relatively recent traumatic events.

beyond trauma. In fact, it was more common than not for women to use the term “victim” in the past tense (e.g. “*was* a victim,” “*had been* a victim,” etc.) and embrace identities imbued with stronger self-determination. Resisting the notion of victimization as self-defining, Eva is determined to move forward:

I didn't know how to deal with it. No one told me what to do if that ever happened to me. My mom didn't tell me “if anything happens to you...” No one told me that. I was scared. So, I have been a victim my whole life. But I'm letting that go. I won't allow them to continue hurting me because I deserve to be happy.

Strategies for recovery ranged from accessing formal treatment and social service providers to methods that are more grounded in cultural values and traditions. For Alice, meaningful recovery from her childhood and adult traumas begins with sobriety. In her eyes, sobriety is crucial not just to her individual health, but also restoring her place in her family and community:

I've been applying to a couple of treatment centers in Anchorage. I don't have a lot of respect for the treatment centers here. So I was looking for something more out there. So I'm applying to these two in Anchorage. I need structure. I need to be around other people who are trying to heal—people like me—24/7. After I get accepted to one of those places, it's going to be long term one—I'm going to spend a lot of time healing and getting structure back into my life. And pretty much starting over. I've done it so many times already. I just want my kids back; I want to get back to taking care of my responsibilities as a mother and person of the community.

Tina's life depends on her sobriety. After her diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver, Tina described the intense battle she has fought thus far to become sober. Similar to sexual assault and domestic violence services in Bristol Bay, there are limited options available to people trying to get clean off drugs and alcohol. Treatment beds are limited and waiting times are lengthy. To complicate matters, because of the size of the community, the odds of encountering someone in treatment with whom there is a shaky history are highly probable. Such was the case with

Charlene and Claire, both of whom attended alcohol treatment with their abusers, who had been court-mandated to treatment, as well. For Tina, a previous altercation with a treatment staff member hindered her ability to re-enter detox. Like Alice, Tina also positioned family as a primary motivator in facilitating her recovery, despite the myriad obstacles she described along the way:

I'm sad I'm not with my family, but I'll be home with them soon enough. I have to be sober for six whole months to get the cirrhosis treatment. So it affects me—I want to live for my daughter. I want to live for myself. I'm just really upset for how things worked out for me. It took forever to get to be able to get into Jake's Place. It was a long horrible process. I kept drinking, drinking, and drinking. Finding out about my health and the cirrhosis—it was too late. I was trying to get help when I found out, and then it turned into not caring and living my life the way I want. It seemed like I was getting the help for other people. I was getting on the phone every single day trying to get into treatment centers while I'm drinking to stay well if that makes sense. My self-respect, morals, attachment to others all went down. I can't quit on my own. In order to go to detox, I have sign up for treatment center. I was kicked out of the other treatment center because of a confrontation with a staff member. I was trying to get into treatment and that's what took so long. They had to relocate me, detox me, and I didn't have a stable place to stay.

Marcy has been attending mental health counseling every week, which she believes has been of great benefit to her. She explained that she previously had bad connotations of psychologists and the overall notion of therapy, so much that she made sure no one saw her walking through the building door during the beginning of her treatment. She described the impact that therapy has had on her, noting that it gave her the strength to come and speak with me for my study:

I didn't know what behavioral health was all about until I started going more. When I went I thought it was crazy people. If I go over there, they'll think I'm crazy. Let me see if anyone is watching. But now I can go over there with my head held high. The word mental health is like "oh Marcy must be crazy in her head." I didn't want anyone to see me walk in. I'm going through mental health every week because I've gone through so much trauma. I bet you if I hadn't been going every week, I wouldn't have had this session. I would have probably just

said “No its not me, I don’t have a problem.” But I needed the monster feeling out of me.

In addition to formal recovery activities, women also participate in a host of informal strategies to facilitate healing and overall wellness. Not surprising, any activity that supported women’s relationship with their physical environment was imbued with healing and restorative properties. Steaming and camping, both of which involve connecting with nature and with family, are important healing methods for Tamara:

Every Friday or Saturday night, I’m out at my sister-in-law’s taking a hot steam bath—just sitting with the ladies and discussing what we did that week and just providing support to each other in the steam bath. And cleansing and just going back to that spirituality—that alone timeout time where you’re away from the world and back in your culture. Like when we pick berries every summer, it’s me and my sister-in-laws—sisters and relations. And we get out there and we’re like we were growing up. Nobody’s on their phones and worried about this and that. Connecting—that’s the word. Connecting with each other. A lot of that or camping. Camping’s a real good source, too, I’ve found because you’re out in the peace with nature. We were always brought up to respect the earth.

Given Violet’s “every person for themselves” mindset, it is not surprising that she prioritizes self-care and activities that involve alone time, personal reflection, and solitude:

Sewing, beading, being with my dogs. Being outside. And kind of away from people. I like where I live because I live at the end of the road where no one is. I have a very nice secluded area. I can mind my own business. I live right on the beach and can walk the beach any time I want.

Marcy also discussed the benefit of connecting with nature as a means of not only healing from the trauma of rape, but also maintaining her sobriety. When Marcy goes berry-picking with her friends, she described a similar dynamic as Tamara in terms of connecting with families and friends, while also re-grounding herself in Yup’ik culture. Ensnored in nature, conversations inevitably lead to storytelling and sharing memories. Marcy also promoted traditional Native crafts and arts in keeping her from drinking. She believes that both Native men and women could benefit from becoming re-invested in these activities, which she termed “sobriety fun”:

And it would make them feel good. It made me feel good. It was like “Here, look what I did, and not go drink.”

On the subject of healing and recovery, some women spoke in more global terms, rather than focusing specifically on themselves. In a way, these women demonstrated why public policy and law (mechanisms of Western social control) are not culturally-responsive to the needs of indigenous women. Rather, they underscored the family as the vehicle of recovery and ultimate change. Nancy, for instance, insisted that healing is not just an individual exercise, but must evoke full engagement from the family, reflecting a collective effort. Nancy also emphasized that material values (i.e. wealth accumulation, material possessions, etc.) must be de-centered in this effort in order to facilitate true healing:

I can't heal them, you can't heal them, the Chief can't heal them. They have to look at themselves and do it for themselves first and then their family. It don't matter if they don't have much money. It don't matter if they have a lot of food. It don't matter if they don't have a skiff or a Honda. It's not about that. But it *has* to start with the family.

Terry echoed Nancy's assertion of healing as a collective effort. For Terry, recovery is not only for her, but also for her son:

I told my mother “I need to get my life back; I'm not going to go down like this.” I don't want to give up; that means my kid will give up.

Ginny built on the notion of collective healing among Native families, also emphasizing the importance of reconciling traditional values with rapidly evolving pace of the modern world.

This is what I was warned about by my grandparents and also my dad and my mom. This is what I was warned: the world is changing real fast and it's going to be real hard to keep up with the changing world. And you have to be careful how you're raising your child, because it's not the same anymore. You have to observe at all times what is going on around you. On top of that while you're observing, think about how you're going to deal with this when it comes to your child.

CONCLUSION

By many accounts, the women with whom I interacted are larger than life. This is certainly not because violence somehow dignifies women or because the multiple marginalities of women's lives inherently make them stronger or more virtuous than others. What really distinguishes these women is that despite seemingly insurmountable barriers, women dealing with the pains of violation, betrayal, and exploitation sought and found deliverance from trauma. Though support from family and people in the community was generally absent or mixed at best, they have paved their own personal, unique trails to recovery and personal wellness. For many, one-on-one relationships with friends, with God, with nature, and especially with themselves eased the crushing weight of traumatic memories and personal and spiritual loss. Feelings of anger and despair are tempered by feelings of hope, if only temporarily, as women rebuild their self-esteem and self-worth. Violence, however, still remains an unnatural, destructive, and non-traditional aspect of the human condition. Despite a first-stage awakening of consciousness and fierce determination, women still characterized themselves and their communities as at risk of succumbing to the woes of violence, addiction, and disaffection. Each of the women situated themselves as at a distinct and unique place in this emotional limbo; further evidence of the extraordinary complex nature of violence in this region. Understanding the historical and cultural backgrounds of the women and their communities, the contextual transformations that have affected their physical, political, economic, and cultural space, their experiences with violence, addiction, and other traumas, and their strategies to seek and build meaningful recovery, I now focus on the implications of these issues from theoretical and practical perspectives. In Chapter 9, I focus on how the findings of this study stack up against a selection of dominant criminological perspectives. As well, I consider how these findings interrogate current legal and

policy mechanisms in the community, culminating in a call to action for culturally-responsive strategies rooted in cultural empowerment.

CHAPTER 9: BRINGING HOME THE WOMAN IN THE MOON

Occasionally throughout this dissertation, I've made reference to how certain findings have called into question the viability of various criminological theories to adequately explain violence against women in Bristol Bay. On the surface, there appear to be numerous pieces to this mosaic of violence that would seem to mesh perfectly with some of the touchstone seminal works that theorize the contextual and causal factors behind violence against women. However, closer inspection of these factors reveals a more nuanced, more complicated, and quite frankly, more frustrating outlook on the problem.

A critical issue is the discipline of criminology itself, which polarizes the theoretical understanding of crime and violence by situating it into two distinct and often competing camps: micro-explanations or macro-explanations. Micro-level theories focus on individual people, individual pathology, and sometimes, their interactions with others. These theories attempt to answer why some individuals commit crime and others do not. Macro-level theories (also known as social structural explanations) explain the "bigger picture" of crime, addressing the variations in community rates of crime as a function of the variations in structural characteristics and conditions of the community. In sum, micro-theories are usually about kinds of people, macro-theories about kinds of places (or social structures, more broadly). The problem with this theoretical division is that it leaves little room for understanding the intersection of people and places, which I believe to be the crux of understanding violence in Bristol Bay. As discussed in Chapter 4, the extent to which women are rooted in and connected to their physical, social, spiritual, and cultural space has profound implications for how they experience and respond to violence. Examining the etiology of violence from a perspective that does not acknowledge the

degree to which the people of Bristol Bay are historically and culturally tied to their communities obscures our understanding of this issue.

Another important, yet often overlooked, issue concerns the treatment of knowledge production in social science generally and criminology, more specifically. According to Connell (2007), social theory has succeeded in presenting itself as universal, timeless, and placeless—embedding viewpoints, perspectives and problems of central metropolitan (or dominant) societies to explain situations that occur in the peripheral, particularly colonized societies. This form of “reading from the centre” (p. 44), Connell argues, relegates historical and contemporary experiences of colonization as a mere nuance at best under the rubric of “Northern”⁶¹ theories. The dominant tendency for importing theory generated in the global North into the periphery thereby bolsters the hegemony of Northern ideals while simultaneously excluding the unique histories and experiences of the Global South. As mentioned in Chapter 2, criminological theories attempting to explicate issues of violence in Native communities and contexts have often failed to account for unique differences that exist between and even within tribal societies, resulting in explanations lacking in geo-political specificity. Because the discipline of sociology has its foundations within a culture of imperialism, the contrast between the global North and global South is often taken for granted. Carrington (2015) observes a similar trend in criminology, noting the tendency of the discipline to borrow and adapt metropolitan, Northern assumptions.

Putting aside for a moment the geographic location of Bristol Bay in the circumpolar north, I characterize this community geo-politically positioned in the global South. As such, dominant theories of crime and violence, fashioned by the northernness of criminological

⁶¹ In Connell’s analysis, the North/South distinction referred to the divide between the metropolitan states of Western Europe and North America, and the countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania

assumptions, are not entirely appropriate for understanding crime and violence in this context. As Carrington, Hogg, and Sozzo (2015) observe, “there is a glaring contrast between the different worlds of violence to be found in the North and South and that underlines the myopia of so much metropolitan criminology” (p. 6). In this section, I discuss the ways in which this work both converges with and diverges from arguments from structural, critical, and feminist criminological camps. The theories I discuss—Social Disorganization Theory, the Theory of Market Society and Violence, and Socialist Feminist Theory—would likely lay claim to understanding violence against women in Bristol Bay. In the following sections, I evaluate the theoretical propositions, signposting instances where understanding the unique context of Bristol Bay and the culture therein often tarnishes dominant theoretical brands.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

Numerous scholars of rural sociology have attempted to employ Social Disorganization Theory as a framework for understanding the dynamics of crime and delinquency in small town America. At the heart of Social Disorganization Theory is the argument that neighborhood ecological characteristics, namely poverty, ethnic heterogeneity/diversity, residential mobility, and family disruption, are important for predicting neighborhood rates of crime. Criminologists, sociologists, and economists have fussed over the exact nature of this relationship, but the gist of it is that these factors collectively influence a community’s capacity to develop and stabilize strong systems of social relationships and methods of social control. Bursik and Grasmick (1993) provide one of the most influential versions of this framework, arguing that neighborhoods marked by poverty, residential instability, racial heterogeneity, and family disruption have weak social networks and are unable to exercise control at private, parochial, and public levels. These weak social networks, under this framework, exert a direct effect on violent crime. In this

section, I address how women's discourses of culture and community pose a substantial challenge to Social Disorganization Theory, illustrating how traditional markers of social disorganization don't necessarily play out the same way in Bristol Bay.

Two kinds of poverty

As mentioned in Chapter 4, by cash economy standards, many individuals and families in Bristol Bay are poor. As of 2014, the percentages of persons in poverty across the Bristol Bay Borough, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, and the Dillingham Census Area were 9.5%, 17.7%, and 17.5%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Across the Bristol Bay Region, it is estimated that about one quarter of all children are living in poverty. In some villages, about half the population is living below the poverty line. Poverty and violent crime have a very intimate relationship under the rubric of social disorganization theory. Countless studies have claimed that impoverished communities lack the capacity to foster tight friendship networks, engage in close supervision of youth, and collectively organize with a common vision to maintain community harmony and cohesion (Smith & Jarjoura, 1988; Warner & Pierce, 1993; Warner & Roundtree, 1997). Regardless of how the relationship between poverty and violence is linked, poverty is consistently ranked one of the strongest indicators of concentrated disadvantage (Pratt & Cullen, 2005).

I do not believe that poverty creates the conditions of social disorganization, as predicted by Social Disorganization Theory, in Bristol Bay communities. Undoubtedly, Alaska Native villages meet the federal thresholds of poverty. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, characterizing oneself as "poor" is dependent on numerous factors, apart from cash income. Ginny described the fundamental difference between Western society's definition of poverty and

hers, emphasizing that income brackets are not appropriate benchmarks for measuring one's wealth:

Poverty here is...yes, there's poverty. We are labeled as that: "poverty." But I disagree with that because for one person, being labeled as "going through poverty"—I don't agree with that. I may not have a job, I may just have a few bucks in my pocket, but I don't feel poor. Because if I want dinner on my table tonight, I can go right out into the slough and go fishing for smelt, and bang! My dinner's right there. So money-wise, yes, poverty's there. But subsistence, no. I don't feel poor. I don't feel broke. There's two ways to say "poverty." I—and I hope I don't offend you—in a white man's world, we could be seen as being poor because we don't have money and this and that. How do you say it? High class, middle class and low class? We maybe be even lower than low class in the village, but that's the way we're seen in the white world because they don't understand what we really have—what keeps us going without money. We're not starving. We've got resources out there.

Mobility

Frequent migration was a notable feature of social life in Bristol Bay. About half the women discussed relocation and serial resettlement during childhood. Migratory patterns were explained as being motivated primarily by subsistence bounties and harvests, which demonstrate cyclical seasonal and regional variation throughout Bristol Bay. As well, historically, frequent travel from village to village was also necessary to maintain familial ties. Because subsistence and familial interconnectedness are cornerstone Native practices and values, mobility served an important cultural function. Social Disorganization Theory argues that residential mobility (also known as residential instability), characterized by high residential turnover rates, creates a social climate conducive to sparse network ties, which in turn leads to violent crime (Sun, Triplett, & Gainey, 2004). In many ways, I believe the opposite to be true in the Bristol Bay context. Nancy explained that the Yup'ik culture only recently has begun to pull away from what she termed "the nomadic way of life," which she likened to "cultural transition" in Bristol Bay. In her opinion, the end of seasonal migratory patterns signaled a change in social organization of Yup'ik society, especially with respect to gender roles. Because men have had to surrender their

roles as providers and adapt to sedentarization⁶², Nancy is convinced that “the men are lost now.”

Keeping in touch with extended family networks has also been a struggle noted by a number of women. Marcy and Sandra, for instance, both noted the lack of air carrier service between the villages, emphasizing that options are not only more limited today, but that they are significantly pricier. For example, in some villages, a one-way ticket from Ironside to Dillingham, a 7-minute puddle hop, currently costs over \$100. According to Ginny, a flight from Eastwind Bay to Dillingham was about \$15. Today, it is about \$140. Furthermore, if flight manifests don't reach a minimum passenger count, flights are usually canceled. It isn't hard, therefore, to understand why extended kinship networks are being described as progressively weaker, as there is dwindling communication and connection between them. The sedentarization of Bristol Bay families is indeed a case of history repeating itself. For instance, Burch (1975) described how the indoctrination of Northwest Alaska Inupiaq into Western religious and educational systems put an end to the travel that had been a notable feature of traditional yearly cycles. Neither women nor men had much opportunity to see relatives who lived in neighboring villages except on rare occasions. The legacies of ANCSA can certainly be implicated in this shift. Through breaking up the land base, ANCSA factionalized Native communities, terminated tribal relationships, and “interjected a dynamic of individualization and conflict that divides people of common culture” (Anders, 1990, p. 140). Residential “stability” is not indicative of strong informal social bonds within the Bristol Bay community, but a reflection of the increasing privatization of common resources.

⁶² Archaeologists have identified sedentarization (also known as sedentism) as a process whereby the organization of modern society imposes social structures or processes, including political and economic pressures, that push nomadic groups to adopt a fixed habitat (Hitchcock, 2004).

The cultural value of migration notwithstanding, there were ways in which some women framed residential mobility as a troublesome to the community. The most obvious of these is the influx of the outside labor force during summer fishing season. There is no doubt that women link the fishing season to heightened violence and criminality. SAFE's yearly activity reports confirm this suspicion, with June and July having the highest adult and child clientele volume. Terry, Violet, and Eva both insisted that inundation by outsider fishermen is the primary catalyst of heroin abuse in the summer time, which in turn, affects the rate of violence against women. Tamara and Claire similarly observe that recreational use of alcohol increases during fishing season, the boat harbor being the prime hub of drinking activity and partying. Though fishermen are not solely directly responsible for the perpetration of violence against women in Bristol Bay, as Brenda emphasized, the influence of seasonal infiltration of this labor force on the social instability of the community cannot be overstated. As Marenin (1992) theorized, violence in Alaska Native communities and village is a by-product of the modernization process in which "individuals experience marginality within their traditional settings and cannot find social and psychological anchors to serve as normative guideposts" (p. 353). Indeed, the modernization of the fishery has potentiated this very marginality. However, this form of mobility has less to do with local residents' ability to maintain close network ties and supervise youth, but more to do with how residents perceive themselves and their value to their families and communities.

Family Disruption

Traditionally, marriage was economically important in Western Alaska Native culture, with men and women trained in sex-specific, but complementary and cooperative, tasks to support subsistence and survival. Historically (and more contemporarily, as was the case with Ginny's first marriage), unions were arranged by parents and reflected parents' strategic political

decisions, who sought to extend family alliances through the institution of marriage. Marriages were also preferably arranged, as Sandra alluded to, between families in the same regional group in order to enhance solidarity and maintain internal cohesion. As such, the institution of marriage was not traditionally a strong social bond. This was prevalent throughout Alaska, as Lantis (1946) suggests in her study of the Native people of Nunivak Island, in which she concluded that both men and women had a succession of marriages—an average of three to four. Divorce in Eskimo society did not create the menace of family disruption that inevitably predicts violent crime under the rubric of social disorganization theory. In fact, Shinkwin and Pete (1983) argue the opposite. They pinpoint the exacerbation of wife battering of the Yup'ik women of the Yukon-Kuskowkim Delta as a product of the influence of Roman Catholicism in the region, which fundamentally altered the symbolic and religious underpinnings ascribed to marriage. Shinkwin and Pete report evidence that women who sought help from their priest regarding violent marriages were counseled that they must keep their marriages intact and remain living together. Though I don't believe this exact dynamic necessarily applies to the women of Bristol Bay, it does demonstrate a certain non-transferability of structural criminology to Native villages.

About half of the women in this study grew up in homes where their parents had divorced when they were children. About the same number of women reported that they were also divorcees themselves. Some of these divorces, like Alice's and Debbie's, were abuse-related, while others were due to other strains, such as infidelity, money woes, or child rearing disagreements, such as Maddy's and Sandra's. Regardless of the reason for marriage dissolution, past or present, I don't believe this is linked to the high levels of violence against women in Bristol Bay. The primary reason relates back to the discussion of Native family organization in

Chapter 4. Often, the Native family stronghold was not solely dependent on unbroken marriages, but rather, an informal social contract among an entire village. Successful childrearing is not the only the product of intact marriage, but more importantly, harmonious communities. Ginny reminds us that “it takes an entire community to raise a child.” Understood this way, it becomes more palpable to acknowledge the value in the ways in which some women described floating from one household to another during childhood, lacking a fixed or predictable pattern.

Social Disorganization Theory would likely conceive of divorce and “family fluidity” (as opposed to family stability) as going against the grain of social organization in village settings, producing conditions favorable to violent crime. However, cultural norms complicate this matter. For women like Brenda and Carrie, the insidious “compartmentalizing” of Native families, characterized by conformation to Western nuclear family schema, has signaled the breakdown of traditional family values.

Consensus on Social Disorganization Theory

There is little doubt that Social Disorganization Theory comes up short when applied to a context such as rural Alaskan villages. One issue may be that Social Disorganization Theory was never intended as a theoretical framework for explaining rural crime in the first place. This theory has its origins in the industrial complex of inner city Chicago. Researchers have since shoe-horned the theoretical propositions to fit rural contexts (myself included). By and large, these studies produce null findings (Barnett & Mencken, 2002; Braithwaite, 2015; Osgood & Chambers, 2000; Weisheit & Wells, 2005).

The other limitation of Social Disorganization Theory lies in its historical utility as a cross-sectional framework, ignoring the dynamic processes by which communities change over time. One of the great menaces of criminological research employing structural analyses is that

studies often model crime under the assumption of static community characteristics. But this is not reality. In fact, Shaw and McKay (1942) originally argued that the spatial distribution of delinquency in a city is the product of “larger economic and social processes characterizing the history and growth of the city and the local communities which comprise it” (p. 14). In this light, it is not necessary just the place that matters, but *how the place changes over time* is key in understanding how crime evolves. Therefore, determining which structural forces are responsible for crime can only be fully understood once the long-term processes of urban development are considered (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003), thereby necessitating the need for longitudinal research to tease out these factors. I found this dynamic process to be the crux of understanding violence against women in Bristol Bay. Understanding such dynamic processes was the heart of appreciating the neo-colonial status of Bristol Bay peoples and communities today. Understanding contemporary Native social structures and how they have evolved is largely absent within existing theoretical formulations of crime and violence in Native communities. Perhaps it is not necessarily the theoretical framework that is inappropriate, but the application and measurement of its core principles that have obscured our understanding of crime and communities. Social Disorganization Theory, tested in a context that allows for historical tracing of community elements, may pass muster for explaining violence against women in an indigenous context. However, the popular operationalization of the indicators of social disorganization belies the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Bristol Bay.

MARKET SOCIETY AND VIOLENCE

Critical criminological theories attempt to unpack the dynamic processes of economic development, stressing that crime is rooted in unequal distribution of wealth and power in society. This inequality, fashioned by capitalist systems and values, breeds crime. Currie (1997)

argues that high levels of violent crime are likely found in market societies—“those in which the pursuit of private gain becomes the dominant organizing principle of social and economic life” (p. 147). Currie identifies seven mechanisms that contribute to this vulnerability, which I discuss below. Although some of the mechanisms Currie enumerates are highly relevant, in my opinion, to violence in Bristol Bay, it is questionable whether other ones foster violent crime as Currie would predict.

The progressive destruction of livelihood

Currie proposes that the long-term absence of opportunities for stable and rewarding work “breeds alienation, undercuts the sense of having a ‘stake’ in legitimate society, and exerts powerful pressures toward participation in illicit enterprises” (p. 155). Exclusion from the labor market creates family disruption and diminishes the capacity of adults to serve as role models and teachers for children. Few local residents in Bristol Bay would disagree that Limited Entry fishing laws in Alaska have pushed the labor market precisely in all the wrong directions. As noted in Chapter 5, official statistics and the women themselves point to the dwindling local participation in fishery. Indeed, this has had a cascading effect, not only negatively impacting opportunities for local entrepreneurship, but also affecting the general quality of life that includes values associated with family, community, culture, and freedom. Currently, there is little to cushion the impact of diminished opportunities for fishery participation. According to most women, as well as community informants, post-secondary education was not highly valued until about the mid-1990s. Many adolescents graduated from high school with the expectation that they would become a fisherman (or a fisherman’s wife). Today, there is a growing acceptance of college education as one of life’s necessities. Therefore, it is likely that the progressive destruction of local livelihood may start to reverse itself as the current generation builds its

skillset, provided that alternative forms of employment are available in Bristol Bay. As Sandra mentioned, jobs are scarce in her village, so a broader structural change involving job creation may be a necessary precursor to restoring economic livelihood. Additionally, it is also important to recall that the economic value of fishing is only one of many premiums that are associated with this enterprise. Economic cushions, such as higher education, likely do little to revitalize craft values such as leadership, togetherness, and resilience that shape the social viability of fishing.

The growth of extremes of inequality and material deprivation

A closely related mechanism through which market societies breed violence is through widespread income inequality and high rates of poverty. It is argued that long-term deprivation breeds chronic violence partly because of its insidious impact on child development. Generally speaking, children that grow up in poor homes are more likely to experience child abuse than children from better off households. Moreover, like the intergenerational cycle of poverty, the traumas of child abuse often recycle to subsequent generations.

Although I have no data to assess the distribution of wealth in Bristol Bay communities, evidence of stratified social classes in those communities clearly pointed to the existence of haves and have-nots. HUD communities, in particular, were situated as areas rife with resource deprivation. Though violence against women appeared to occur across all pockets of the community (haves and have-nots alike), HUD was characterized as particularly criminogenic. Unemployment, family disruption, and addiction run rampant at HUD, and most women link all these corrosive features to violence against women.

Again, it is difficult to truly assess the relationship between inequality, deprivation and violent crime in a mixed economy. By now, it should be clear that the conceptualization of

poverty in an economy that is still partially supported by subsistence activities and transaction is complicated. The extent to which one feels “poor” is not solely dependent on how much cash is in one’s pocket. It depends on the temperature of the air, which impacts whether wild game will wander down from the mountain during hunting season. It depends on whether the precipitation levels and wind gusts are just right, which impact whether the salmon will swim upstream. It depends on whether the Pebble Mine Project will ever come to fruition, which could eviscerate the Bristol Bay fishery forever.

The withdrawal of public services and supports

In market societies, individuals and families are forced to fend for themselves to secure the necessities of living, particularly when faced broad structural shifts in the labor market. Public support is generally withdrawn in market societies, forcing individuals and families to adapt to a survival-of-the-fittest mentality. For instance, reliable and affordable child care facilities and after-school programs, which ease the strain the parents’ full work schedules, are abysmally depleted in a market society.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, SAFE services are being cut right and left in light of the state fiscal crisis. Currently, SAFE’s MYSPACE Youth Wellness Center Program (one of the only after-school programs for community youth) is in danger of shutting its doors due to lack of funding for support staff. The MYSPACE Program was funded through a state grant in 2011, awarded under then-Governor Sean Parnell’s campaign against domestic violence. Since June 2015, MYSPACE has been surviving month-to-month as SAFE scrambles to procure the minimum \$6500 per month needed for operations and staffing. They have sent a slew of grant applications to public and private foundations, solicited private donations, and even organized a Christmas bazaar last year. Nothing has come through as of yet.

The Bristol Bay community has developed some strategies, however, to mitigate the stresses that worry families in light of the structural shifts in the Bristol Bay rural economy. One of these was mentioned by Claire, which she referred to as “fish leave.” Because the fishing season is so short in Bristol Bay, the majority of fishermen maintain employment in alternative sectors during off-season. Many work in the public sector, such as public works, the hospital, or social services. Like jury duty or time-off-to-vote leave, fish leave affords fishermen time off from their year-round employment for commercial and subsistence fishing. More importantly, Bristol Bay, cognizant of the decreased local participation in the fisheries, has spearheaded initiatives to regain local economic control. The Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation developed the Permit Loan Program in 2008 as a means of assisting local residents with entrée to the fishery. The Permit Loan Program provides financial counseling, a loan guarantee program, equity assistance for the principal loan, and technical assistance and financial training for successful applicants. Despite this assistance program, certain challenges remain. Applicants must show proof of tax return completion in the three years prior to the application year, which excludes a substantial number of would-be applicants. As well, many applicants lack the necessary credit to qualify for a loan. Local residents also are hesitant to enter the fishery in light of dropping fish prices (particularly since the proliferation of fish farms). As Maddy mentioned, higher education is being instilled as a core necessity in today’s youth, opening them up more job opportunities in adulthood. These challenges notwithstanding, since 2008, the Program has brought 33 permits back to the region.

The erosion of informal networks of mutual support

The withdrawal of public services and supports, Currie argues, is compounded by the concurrent tendency of market societies to also corrode informal social supports and networks of

care, resulting in a “thinning” of the community that is characterized by split extended families, rapid geographic mobility, and narrowed networks of friendship and mutual care. Any discussion pertaining to respect and care for elders inevitably evoked this notion of systematic thinning of community kinship networks. Terry and Ginny both emphasized that the elders’ knowledge is constantly pushed aside in favor of a fixed mindset that is closed off to the value of learning and the virtue of humility. Nancy pins the drug and alcohol addiction issues plaguing her village as a direct consequence of this mindset, noting “we had our elder’s knowledge and values pushed aside, and that’s when heroin, marijuana, alcohol, and pills came in.”

Though there is solid evidence suggesting an erosion of informal social supports in Bristol Bay, it is equally important to acknowledge how the women in this community have been able to preserve certain informal social support mechanisms despite this overwhelming erosion. As discussed in Chapter 8, one of the most remarkable features of these communities lies in their ability to initiate grassroots movements and provide social support where formal institutions and public supports have failed to do so. For Debbie, this consisted of offering her home as a safe haven to women and children in crisis within her village. For Tamara and Sandra, the seemingly simple act of listening to others’ stories of turmoil provides a viable, if only temporary, support system. Although there is an increasing move toward sedentarization, this does not seem to translate to completely eviscerated networks of mutual care. It may be that we are simply not far along enough to realize the full impact of the structural shifts that have occurred in Bristol Bay.

The spread of materialistic and neglectful culture

Market societies are underpinned by a distinct set of cultural values and norms predicated on fierce competition and individual conspicuous consumption over the collective values of community, contribution, and productivity. Currie argues that these latter values, which

traditionally allow communities to maintain social cohesion and thus buffering against violence, are cast aside in the face of economic deprivation and uncertainty. The notion of rural communities as “consumerist societies” may sound ludicrous, let alone rural Native villages that are still partially economically anchored in hunting and gathering activities. However, the increasing institutionalization of Western culture in Bristol Bay was discussed as a profound source of local exploitation, irresponsibility, and unpredictability.

Based on the discourse of community change, there is very strong evidence of a growing preoccupation with acquisition and consumption of material goods in Bristol Bay. The value of cash, in particular, has become much more anchored in rural economy than ever before. As a mixed rural economy, cash has always exercised some degree of influence on rural residents. But, cash’s primary role was to subsidize subsistence activities. For instance, earning cash provides better hunting weaponry, more efficient cooling systems for fish, and larger storage capacities for food harvests. Today, it appears that the roles of cash and subsistence have switched places, with cash as central to economy and subsistence more on the periphery.

The deregulation of the technology of violence.

The United States leads the world in firearm-related violence, suicides, and accidents with more than 32,000 deaths yearly, far exceeding any other industrialized nation in the world (Centers for Disease Control, 2015; Richardson & Hemenway, 2011). Under Market Theory, the unfettered availability and lax regulation of firearms in the United States contributes to the country’s unmatched rate of firearm-related deaths.

Undoubtedly, the prevalence of firearms and other potentially lethal weaponry in rural Alaska homes is likely high, as this is a necessity for subsistence. It is for this very reason that is difficult to distinguish between a rifle/handgun as a *technology of violence* versus a *technology*

of survival. One day, I was sitting in the SAFE living room busying myself with organizing my interview transcripts and field notes when Cora, a SAFE shelter advocate walked in to join me. I had become quite close with Cora over the course of the study. She frequently went out of her way to come and say hello to me when her shifts overlapped with the times I was at SAFE, always bringing a hot plate of any leftover food from mealtime. This afternoon, Cora walked in the room with a plate of freshly made halibut fish cakes in one hand and a FedEx package in the other that had arrived from Washington state.

“My daughter remembered my birthday, after all!” she declared heartily as she arduously picked and pulled on the inch-thick tape job surrounding the package. A wide smile covered Cora’s face as she opened the box flaps. As she reached in the box, I expected her to pull out a framed photograph, a bottle of perfume, a teddy bear, or perhaps a Hummel figure. Slowly, as if she was unveiling QVC’s latest revolutionary invention, she produced a wood-handled stainless steel Bowie knife.

“Perfect!” she proclaimed auspiciously. “I’ve been needing another one of these for the longest times!”

Puzzled, I asked myself what 74-year old woman could possibly be “in need” of a primitive technology? Gender and age stereotyping at its finest. *Remember, you’re in Bristol Bay*. Cora’s pride and excitement for her new acquisition was indicative of her ability to improve her subsistence craft. To Cora, this was not an instrument of violence, but a tool that would ensure her ability to survive and thrive in the community. As mentioned in Chapter 4, women were introduced to the subsistence lifestyle from a very young age. Ginny, for instance, described her entrée into subsistence fishing, complete with the introduction of subsistence technology:

One day I picked up my grandmother's woman's knife and I copied her while she was splitting fish. She never told me "you're going to get hurt" or anything. She just let me do what she was doing and I was 7 years old. That's when I started splitting fish.

Weapon involvement in violence was rarely discussed by women, with the exception of Charlene and Debbie, who had both been threatened at gunpoint. I'm skeptical as to whether there has, in fact, been a deregulation of the technology of violence in Bristol Bay. In fact, women like Debbie may be inclined to think that such technologies are over-regulated, as evidenced by the increasingly restrictive subsistence policies. Despite the "market orientation" of Bristol Bay, in addition to the proliferation of firearms and other "technologies of violence" in this community, I do not observe the seamless meshing that Currie suggests. Certainly Alaska is a frontier society (hence "The Last Frontier State"), but it appears that the technologies of violence hold a symbolic and intrinsic meaning for the people of Bristol Bay that Market Theory does not fully disentangle. However, research has shown that suicides, particularly among Alaska Native youth, are more likely to be carried out with a firearm. One study found that of all firearm related fatalities in Alaska, 65% of these deaths were suicide-related, compared to 23% that were homicide-related and 12% that were ruled accidental, unintentional, or undetermined intent (Johnson, Moore, Mitchell, Owen, & Pilby, 2000).

The weakening of social and political alternatives

Finally, market societies breed violence through systematic weakening of cultural ideologies and communal institutions available to them to respond to the adversities of social, economic, and political turmoil. In essence, violence is a result of backlash of exploited people who are unable to challenge the forces that undermine their family and community. I believe there is compelling evidence to suggest that the people of Bristol Bay, men and women alike, are at the mercy of grindingly oppressive economic and political edicts that have shaped and

cemented their futures. Though I lack direct evidence from the population on which this theoretical proposition bases its assumptions (i.e. the perpetrators of violence), women's portraits of abusive men are suggestive of an inability to channel frustrations into meaningful social or political action. In Nancy's opinion, violence and alcohol abuse are both the result of men's inability to access acceptable outlets to address their exploitation and disempowerment:

They got sick and don't know who they are anymore. They're sick. They're lost. My husband was one of the best men you ever knew in your life. Then he got sick and couldn't provide for us anymore. I was providing. He grew up believing the men provided. He was ashamed. The people here are also at the beginning of a cross-cultural transition where they have to treat the women as equals or they are not going to make it. So the men are lost. The same thing happened in [Southeast Alaska]—they end up beating each other, abusing one another.

Despite these substantial barriers, there are a few things worth noting. First, the fact that a number of women have begun to create their own vehicles for social change in their respective communities speaks volumes to communities' ability to take a stand against structural and social oppression. The fact that there exist opportunities for people to create their own social and political alternatives when other formal channels are blocked may indicate something unique about rural communities and their ability to self-sustain.

There is also evidence that SAFE, as an organization, has been effective in providing a vehicle through which to challenge and contain the threat of violence. Though SAFE's counts of sexual assault and domestic violence clients have not significantly decreased in the past 10 years, the profile of the "typical victim" has changed, especially with respect to age. Whereas 20 years ago, the average victim seeking SAFE services was likely in her late- to early-40s, today's average woman is substantially younger, in her mid-20s, suggesting that women in abusive relationships are seeking help much earlier. It's easy to understand the SAFE's and broader community's frustration, therefore, when SAFE is characterized solely as "the women's shelter."

This misunderstanding of SAFE as just an institution that provides emergency shelter to women in crisis undercuts the broader role of SAFE as a catalyst of social and political movement in the community.

Consensus on Market Theory of Violence

Compared to a social disorganization lens, a critical approach fares substantially better in situating violence against women in the Bristol Bay community. Though there are elements of Currie's theory of market societies that do not transfer well to the community of focus in this work, this theory does account for the dynamic processes of economic, social, political change that are the crux of the violence mosaic. Part of the reason for the incongruity between Currie's characterization of market societies and my own characterization of Bristol Bay may lie in the unit of analysis for which the theory was originally intended. Just as Social Disorganization Theory was developed with the urban metropolis as the object of inquiry, I believe Currie assumed a cash economy as the organizing principle of market societies, not a mixed one. The fact that this community is no longer solely a subsistence economy, but also not exclusively a cash economy, introduces an additional layer of complexity that criminological theory has yet to tackle.

FEMINIST CRIMINOLOGY

Women's discourses of violent victimization often evoked notions of male dominance, masculinity, patriarchy, and control. Gender inequality and women's oppression are the cruxes of feminist criminological perspectives. The findings of this study suggest that male domination and impunity coupled with an increasingly capitalist exploitation of the Bristol Bay community interact in complex ways to condition misogynist attitudes, and ultimately, women's victimization. However, though feminist criminology is predicated on the notion that gender

must be centered in the analysis of violence against women, this strand of theoretical reasoning also relies on general propositions, specifically with regard to its treatment of the concept of patriarchy. Feminist theory generally defines patriarchy generally as the structures and systems that shape women's subordination and men's dominance. A major criticism of patriarchy is that it is difficult to measure thus, its explanatory value is difficult to determine in different settings (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 2015). In this section, I apply a socialist feminist lens to understanding the ways in which patriarchy and capitalism in Bristol Bay position men as dominant and women as subordinate, specifically pointing to how shifts in political and rural economy might be implicated in the antagonistic relationships that exist between men and women in Bristol Bay.

The subsistence lifestyle in Bristol Bay is, and historically has been, a male-dominated enterprise. Part of this is rooted in cultural norms and beliefs that support the male as the hunter/gatherer and the female as the "production manager." Man goes out, hunts and forages for food, and brings it home. The woman is charged with the task of stock management, which may involve cutting meat, splitting fish, and food storage and preparation. Numerous women, young and elderly, grew up in families supporting this gendered division. Eva explained how responsibilities were doled out to girls and boys in her family:

Girls do berry picking and fish cutting, the household things, and the guys would do the hunting, upkeep of the house and vehicles. That's how we were taught. The girls do the household—keeping the house, cleaning the house, berry picking and the fish cutting, doing the whole process, drying the fish. And the guys took care of the hunting part.

Certainly, there has always been a gendered division of labor, but not one that has always been an expression of sexism or oppression, but rather a cooperative model. In this context, a division of labor supported by gender roles was historically necessary for family and village survival. As in many hunting cultures, a long list of historical teachings and prohibitions govern

subsistence practices in Yup'ik Eskimo culture. Traditional Yup'ik Eskimo society limited women's role in hunting activities, particularly during her menstrual cycle. Traditional beliefs claimed that a menstruating woman was thought to offend and repel fish and game, as well as adversely affect a man's hunting ability. Women were expected to observe certain constraints during menses, and her mobility was limited during these cycles. Morrow (2002) warns against imbuing such traditional practices with repressive ideology. For one, Yup'ik rules were based on a consistent ideology which applied to all categories of persons in varying physical, mental and spiritual states. To this end, there were many teachings that were gender-, age-, and situation-specific. Though an exhaustive catalog of such teachings is impossible to enumerate here (e.g. young males were expected to severely limit water intake, men who had recently lost a relative were advised against participating in hunting activities, etc.), it is feasible to assume that a decontextualized glance at any of these could single out other categories of Eskimo society as socially regulated subjects. It also bears emphasizing that the overarching principle behind these rules was not one of draconian oppression, but more of an exercise in promoting awareness. These teachings were viewed as essential for maintaining reciprocal relationships among social, physical, and metaphysical worlds and ensuring the wellbeing of individuals and their communities. Borrowing from Ross (1992), such teachings are best understood "not as rules *against* one thing or another, but as insistent exonerations *towards* something" (p. 175).

Given these cultural contingencies, it becomes clearer why commercial fishing (and subsistence activities in general) remains a male-dominated enterprise in Bristol Bay. Such contingencies may inform why Brenda initially believed that her brother should inherit her father's fishing permit or why Tamara has observed occasional heckling of men that bring their spouses to assist with the work on fishing trips. But it is not the subsistence culture or cultural

norms of the Native community that have signaled gender-based social-structural ambiguities. Rather, it is the establishment of a limited entry fishery that shifted the cultural premium placed on fishing, inculcating patriarchal norms that foster oppressive attitudes toward women. Nancy's and Debbie's experiences with violence square with this hypothesis, both having endured traumatic victimization which stems from the capitalist exploitation of the watershed communities. For Nancy, her husband's inability to provide for the family following the sale of the family permit and her entrance into the workforce created an antagonistic relationship, at odds with the traditional cooperative model that previously characterized husband-wife partnerships. For Debbie, her ownership of a commercial permit bucked the capitalist expectations of the labor market, with violence being used against her as a method to relegate her back to a position of subordination.

A subtler, yet equally compelling shift, is the gradual departure from Native admonishments and teachings to the legal consciousness of Western culture. As discussed in Chapter 8, Yup'ik elders have attributed today's high crime rate to the fact that young people are taught discipline in a manner that is aligned with *Kass'aq* rules and laws, which they see as doing little to change a person's behavior. It wasn't surprising, therefore, for women today to frame their responsibilities as compulsory and incontestable. Far from viewing the gendered division of labor today as an egalitarian, Ginny pondered on whether violence against Alaska Native women is indeed a consequence of women trying to "hold onto" their traditions and culture:

When my ex-husband used to be out hunting, I'd cook. But I don't eat until he comes home. The man came first. The man had the authority. The man had the power. The man had this and that because they were the provider. I respected that. Maybe because that was embedded into my heart that this is what you are to do when you become a wife. The man comes first and the man does this and that. *Everything* had to do with the husband. And that's what I did with my second

husband and my first husband. Is it because of that? Is it because the man comes first in our lives? For women that hold onto their culture in Alaska, is it because of that? Is it because the men see it that way because they are the men in the family? They have the power? Is it because of that? I wonder.

Ginny's logic speaks volumes to the relegation of women to an inferior status. But the important distinction between Ginny's position as a woman, and those of her female ancestors, lies with how these ideas have been inculcated. I'm certain that the gendered division of labor that Ginny discusses was likely similar to that of traditional Eskimo society, pre-Contact. What is different, though, is that for Ginny, these ways of living unmalleable and incontestable. Her perceived inability to challenge these norms separates her from her ancestors. Nancy hinted to this dynamic of change in her village:

The men are in charge in Yup'ik—in order to do subsistence in Bristol Bay, you need a man to do it. A woman can do it, but it is a man's world today. The men are in charge, they make the decisions of what they'll hunt and decide the methods. *Now*, women have to do what the men want.

During her marriage to Ted, Alice described frequent episodes of violence rooted in oppressive ideological beliefs positioning Ted as Alice's superior. Indeed, Ted's words and actions clearly support the feminist critique of patriarchy as the linchpin of gendered power relations. Again, however, Alice's experiences speak to a more nuanced feminist perspective that demands a level of abstraction accounting for time, history, space, and culture. Alice's description of one violent incident between her abusive husband and her father illustrates a generation gap in terms of how "women's work" is treated and understood today compared to the relative past:

There was this one time he attacked my dad. He was there during the winter and he kept saying he was bored and my dad finally got tired of it. He said "you could wash dishes" and Ted said "Alice can do it." And it bothered my dad because my dad helped around the house and wasn't like "you're a woman you have to do all the housework." He helped around the house with everything, taking care of kids and everything—it wasn't a gender thing. He's old school, I guess. So that really

bugged him and they got into a little spat. And my dad did the same thing as me—he put his hand up because Ted goes right into the face and he was yelling and my dad put his hand up like this. My mom and me were in the bedroom folding clothes and then they got into it. My dad walked away from it—he was just protecting himself. He finally got up and put his coat on and said “I’m not doing this,” so he took off.

The frustration that Alice’s father felt with regard to Ted’s misogynistic beliefs may be indicative of his worry that *Yuuyaraq* (the Yup’ik way of life) is in jeopardy. This was also discussed to a degree by Debbie when discussing her grandfather’s abuse toward her grandmother. Like Alice’s father, Debbie’s grandfather also struggled to maintain a cooperative model of subsistence life within the family. As his sons (Debbie’s uncles) fell deeper into alcoholism, his frustrations increased. Debbie framed her grandfather’s actions against her grandmother as symptomatic of the exasperation and aimlessness she perceived him as experiencing:

When I was growing up, Yup’ik girls clean house and make sure elderly people are cared for. Make sure the babies are fed and dry. If there’s diapers to wash, you have to participate in the cleaning and helping. I always cleaned spruce chickens—that was my job. If grandma went ice fishing and caught a handful of fish, I would be the one to clean them for her. Or if the guys came home with a moose, grandma and I would cut it up into meal sized pieces and put it away. The boys did the heavy stuff—my grandpa fed the dogs and we cut up a lot of fish for the dogs. Eddie and Johnny occasionally got wood, but it seemed like in our family, the guys didn’t want to do anything. They got to do what they wanted to do and it was so unfair. I used to cry because in the morning after a deep snow, I had a honey bucket to go dump and it would always be full and I always managed to splash it on myself. So as I grew older, I hated my uncles, because they never had a turn. And I always felt it was no fair. My grandpa used to get really mean to my grandma; he was just a mad man. I think it was because his sons were frustrating him so much, he took it out on her. He didn’t know what else to do. I got up and got in between him and told him “you can’t hurt my grandma no more!” in Yup’ik. He was so angry when I got between him and grandma. His face melted and he got on his knees and grabbed me and he just sobbed. That was the last time I witnessed him do that to her. But it wasn’t long after that she died.

Consensus on Feminist Criminology

Generally speaking, the development of feminist criminology, as both an empirical and political project, centered gender as the primary focus of inquiry, elevating sexual difference and localized gendered power relations and structures, such as patriarchy, as undeniable realities that shape the experiences of both men and women (Messerschmidt, 1988). Nevertheless, the assumptions of feminist criminology, though remarkable in instigating a fundamental shift away from the “add women and stir” approach that formerly dominated mainstream criminological thought, elevate and reproduce certain forms of Northern criminological thinking. Critics contend that the prioritization of sexual difference as a central homogenizing category has resulted in a gradual narrowing of the feminist gaze, reducing all women to a universal category void of their diverse experiences across time, space, history, economy, and culture (Carrington et al., 2015; Mohanty, 1994). In this respect, women outside these normative constructions have, in essence, become colonized. Carlen (1999) advises that only through incorporating the interconnections encompassing social position, race, culture, and gender can the chronic over-representation of women in the criminal justice system be fully understood. In this study, understanding how the social roles of men and women were forced into cultural assimilation as a result of Limited Entry Fishing and shifts in rural and political economy is imperative to understanding violence in this context. Emptying this violence of its post-colonial and geo-political underpinnings further obscures our understanding.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Chapter 1 introduced the Native story of *The Woman in the Moon*. To recap, this moral of this story is that when one is faced with a problem, the solution to that problem lies within one’s family, community, or some other collective whole. In the story, instead of running toward her

home village, the woman who was experiencing distress ran in the opposite direction; so far, in fact, that she found herself trapped in an inescapable cycle of trauma and torment.

This story may or may not be specifically about sexual abuse—I'm not sure. When Desa told me this story, she explained that the Yup'ik people had no words for rape, assault, or even sexual harassment, so the word "bother" was used to refer to these situations. Thus, some have taken this story to mean that the Native people must have always experienced some degree of violence against women. I'm unable to say conclusively through this study whether that is true or not. I doubt it, but I don't believe this is the point of the story. As Desa explained, the purpose of the story was to teach children that when you are faced with a problem—any problem—that the solution lies in your village. If you don't seek out that resolution "at home," even greater problems abound.

The story, however, has profound implications for violence against women in Bristol Bay today. The one thing that remains unexplained in this story is *why* the woman ran away from her village in the first place. It seems to me that the women in this study may have shed some light on this in the contemporary context. As women described their myriad traumas, abuses, and physical and emotional scars, the common thread among all of them was that these issues were further aggravated by the fact that none of them could turn to their communities for help. After talking with these women and keeping up with some of them up to this very day, it isn't entirely surprising to understand how things have gotten to this point. Of course, the most important question that remains is how do we resolve these issues so that the future generations of Alaska Natives are able to turn to their families and communities for answers to their troubles. As women historically characterized the family and the community as the bulwark against social

ills, it only makes sense that these institutions be the focus of any effort to temper the traumas of abuse.

I was once told early in my training as a researcher that part of the “recipe” to writing an effective conclusion to a research paper is to identify my own ideas for improving or fixing the complex problem on which I had expended time, energy, and institutional resources. And it’s for good reason that empirical research prescribes recommendations for improvement and change, not least of which that it provides a blueprint for translating potentially complex results and conclusions into meaningful action. Yet, a certain irony beleaguers me every time I consider the “what can be done” question. One of the major take-aways of this work is that violence against women in Bristol Bay has its roots, largely, in policies and recommendations fashioned by Western ideals that were intended for the betterment of the Native people. The idea of thrusting my own recommendations onto this population, albeit supported by data furnished by Native women themselves, is jarring to say the least. Understanding the resilience of these women is key to understanding why any effort to remedy their plight must be a collaborative effort, as opposed to traditional top-down approaches to justice interventions. Tamara articulated this beautifully when she explained how she achieved sobriety with the support of her non-imposing peers:

They know my past and everything about me, but still don’t push me down and walk away from me. They’re the types that reach out and say “Hey, you fell down. Here’s my hand.” *But they don’t force their hand on me. They wait until I reach for it.*

With that disclaimer out of the way, I certainly do feel there are a number of strategies that can enhance Bristol Bay’s ability to address and contain the threat of violence against women. First, some form of cultural rehabilitation is necessary in order to restore Native values and norms within individuals, their families, and their communities. I don’t believe a single

woman would contest that the current state of social affairs in their respective communities has pulled from its original way. However, cultural rehabilitation is somewhat of a misnomer here. Technically, rehabilitation means to remake in the *same* or *original* image. According to the majority of women, this is impossible. It would be naïve to believe that the people of Bristol Bay could revive the exact traditions, norms, and practices of their ancestors, just as it would be for any culture.⁶³ I feel I can safely assume that no woman, especially Debbie, wants to return to a time when emptying honey buckets was a daily reality of pre-indoor plumbing rural life. As well, living a communal lifestyle promoting sharing and reciprocity becomes progressively harder in a rural economy that has become increasingly dependent on cash commodities. Ginny described how the material conditions of the modern world preclude the idea of “returning” to cultural tradition, offering a realistic, if somewhat grim, outlook:

There’s no going back. There is no going back. It’s a new world now. It’s the new modern world. And that’s why the communication between the husband and wife here nowadays is messed up and that’s why it becomes violent. Shit—nobody’s being taught how to deal with things like this! We cannot go back. We cannot go back to how we used to live. It can never happen. It’s lost already—it changed. The world changed. It could never happen. The younger generation is the tough part and it’s getting worse.

Within Ginny’s somewhat bleak assessment lies what I believe to be the linchpin of cultural rehabilitation—re-investment in children. Every conversation about social, political, economic, medical, and cultural woes always evoked concerns of today’s youth in Bristol Bay. Whether discussing the current heroin epidemic, village politics, family quarrels, subsistence challenges, pollution, or violence, women almost always focused on the implications of individual- and community-level traumas on the today’s generation and their ability to absorb

⁶³ Geertz (1973) reminds us that culture is not static and that group cohesion grows over time and is reactive to material surroundings. Therefore, it is folly to base any sort of policy, intervention, or social movement on purely on cultural expectations and traditions, leaving the material conditions unexamined.

those traumas. Despite the marked shift from a collective consciousness to a more individualistic mindset, there was a lucid recognition of the need to collectively band together with a common vision. Ginny went on further to explain how educating children and collective mobilization must be viewed as twin objectives to resolving issues of addiction and violence in her village:

Culturally, I think I'm doing ok so far. Educating my children about our culture and way of life—I know I'm doing ok so far on that with the help of my elders and parents. I believe I'm ok. I know I'm ok. As long as I ask for help and don't try to do it by myself. The culture part has to do with the community—the whole community. It doesn't just come from one person.

Terry also emphasized the need for teaching children as a fundamental objective in cultural rehabilitation. She described how she now tries to consider her son in all the decisions she makes, making every moment a teaching moment of sorts:

We talk about the drug activity. *Just because mom drinks, doesn't mean you have to. Make sure you get an education because alcohol is kind of like an escape from reality. And if you escape and don't accomplish your goals, it's not going to be fun; it's going to be depressing because it will hold you back. It kills brain cells. It also creates unnecessary decisions, like taking a girl home, you wake up and it's not someone you want to be with. And she turns up pregnant because you didn't wear protection. And she doesn't want an abortion and you have to be a father before it's too soon.* I'm trying to teach my kid that there's other ways of handling things. I said "Mom is going to become unglued at the seams if someone beats on you and puts bruises on you." That was part of the reason I quit spanking him because it was like hitting myself. What am I going to do—hit myself? And I started crying too; I was like "Oh my god I'm hitting my kid!" What is this going to teach him? My son doesn't need to see me go through a bunch of men—what's that going to teach him?

Eva spoke in more general terms than Terry on the mission of cultural rehabilitation, but still prioritizing the objectives of collective mobilization and youth empowerment as the primary catalysts to make this change possible. To Eva, a common vision guiding child edification will create the necessary precondition to teaching boys about women's rights and the admonition against violence:

I think having some kind of talking session and letting the community know it's ok to talk about this kind of stuff...because the victim isn't the problem. It's the person that does that. Families just don't talk about it. I think that's a big reason why guys do that. I know women can do it too, but it's mostly guys. I think the families really need to teach men that it's not ok to do that. I really think families need to start talking. It should be common sense that it is not ok to do that, but I think—especially with family patterns—if they see their family do that, then they think it's ok. I don't think families take the time to teach their boys “you can't do that to a woman; you can't do that to other people; you can't do that to anyone.” I just don't think families take the time to do that with their kids—any kids. You could teach girls, too. This world—I just don't understand. We shouldn't be teaching women to defend themselves against a rapist. We should be teaching men not to rape. I felt like I was going to be blamed because I see that they like to blame the victims, rather the person that did that. I just don't understand where that mindset came from.

Eva's bewilderment as to where the “blaming the victim” complex originates can partially be parsed out through examining the justice system in Bristol Bay, which is mired in a Western modality, characterized by a preoccupation with technical procedure and retributive ideals. Even as women spoke about their victimization, traces of this model often entered into their discourse. For instance, it was not uncommon for women to grade their victimization, using their own or their peers' experiences as a type of benchmark to calibrate the severity of the act. Maddy's experience with sexual victimization was limited to childhood, inclusive of molestation and rape by cousins, an uncle, and her grandfather. She insisted that her experience “was not one of violence, but one of sexual abuse.” I didn't ask her to differentiate “violence” from “abuse,” but I suspect that she may define sexual violence as requiring some degree of physical injury. In describing one episode, she never used the term “rape” to describe a time when her uncle “performed oral sex on me and then tried to penetrate me with his penis,” perhaps because he ceased after she expressed physical pain, thus qualifying the experience as an attempted rape and not a completed rape (this is how a defense attorney would qualify these crimes, effectively minimizing the injury and the victim).

I found that other women occasionally engaged in “grading” their experiences. After Eva took me through her victimization and trauma in a 33-minute monologue, she concluded somewhat abruptly with the following statement: *I know my story isn't as violent as most rapes. There wasn't as much force as there was with other victims.* Marcy employed a similar schema in characterizing an attack made against her by a nephew:

I had a nephew—I really respected him because he was my niece’s husband. They used to always stay at my house when my kids were small. He tried forcing himself on me. I was on the couch—I kicked him and he kind of flew back. I wasn’t raped by him. *There was just an attempt.*

Lisa reminded me that it is all but impossible for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to not grade their injuries, because this is how things will play out in court (and of course, that’s only if the perpetrator is reported, arrested and prosecuted). I see two problems with this. For one, grading one’s injury essentially characterizes some acts of violence as “less than” others. Therefore, a logical extension of this mindset is that there are some rapes, assaults or abusive acts at one the end of the continuum which are egregious; and then there are others at the other end of the continuum which are not as bad. Perhaps excusable. This is and has been a blot in the United States criminal justice system, and this extends beyond just those victims seeking justice in Bristol Bay. But this justice dynamic also exerts a unique blow to the women of Bristol Bay. Preoccupation with being able to define the criminal act (the hallmark of the adversarial model) detracts from the Native goal of problem-solving. As mentioned in Chapter 8, retribution is not a top priority of women in pursuit of justice. They are focused on how to solve the problem and restoring harmony to the community. The erosion of cultural ways continues to be facilitated by a criminal court process that is hell-bent on punishment—of both the victim and the offender. To this end, I believe a necessary element of cultural rehabilitation must include a revisit to traditional notions of community-based justice.

While the idea of re-engineering the justice system of Bristol Bay is practical in theory, numerous obstacles make this idea little more than pie in the sky. Federal Indian policy dating back to Congressional Acts of the early 19th century has dictated that federal authorities will have concurrent criminal jurisdiction with tribes in Indian Country. This arrangement was crafted to meet the sovereignty needs of tribes and provide tribal justice systems the flexibility to function and grow. This changed in 1953 when Congress passed Public Law 280 (PL 280). This law allowed six states to exert criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country. A number of problems pertaining to state criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country have been identified, the most significant of which consist of jurisdictional uncertainty and infringement on tribal sovereignty. PL 280 states have been historically denied funding to develop tribal justice systems due to the misconception that states have assumed exclusive jurisdiction over criminal matters (Goldberg & Champagne, 2006). The result has been that communities PL 280 states often lack strong partners in tribal law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. This lack of tribal capacity presents formidable challenges for effective response to crimes occurring in Native communities, especially crimes of sexual assault (Deer, Goldberg, Singleton, & Eagle, 2007). Alaska is one of the six PL 280 states. The obvious recommendation is that tribes must be encouraged to build their legal infrastructure, marshal resources, and use the power that they indeed hold. But, as Debbie, Nancy, and Eva remind us, this is easier said than done in a village setting where constant conflict among the community, tribe, and corporation hampers progress. In this light, it is easy to understand why Sandra has observed minimal movement with Tribal Court in her village.

Building tribal capacity to institute tribally controlled judicial systems and traditional approaches to address violence against women will not only provide a more culturally-relevant

response to violent crime in Bristol Bay, but also has the potential to relieve the strains that exist within the current criminal justice system. Up until about the mid-1990s, Bristol Bay's legal resources were quite minimal, with the District Attorney's office consisting of one attorney and one paralegal. Around the mid-1990s, Bristol Bay got two additional positions funded—an Assistant District Attorney and a victim-witness coordinator position. This increase in staffing allowed for a division of caseloads (one attorney handled felony cases, the other handled misdemeanors), with the attorney in charge of prosecuting sexual assault cases having a better chance of pushing for a trial or conviction. According to numerous SAFE advocates, the attorney that prosecuted these cases was very aggressive and prosecuted the majority of cases brought to her. This continued for about 10 years until, according to Lisa, she was forced to leave her position due to Department of Law directives mandating that she exercise a more "conservative approach" in deciding which cases to prosecute. Subsequent attorneys were more lax and were more prone to simply "let some cases go."

Due to severe state budget cuts today, Bristol Bay is being forced to cut the additional positions allocated to the DA's Office 20 years ago. This means the Office will return to the same staffing model it had in the 1980s (one attorney and one paralegal), despite a significantly higher yearly caseload of about 600 criminal cases. Lisa forecasted how this would affect sexual assault case processing in Bristol Bay:

So you know what's going to happen to every single sex assault case? *Gone*. We're not even going to see sex assault cases go to trial unless they are *perfect*. Not unless everybody remembers everything, not unless everybody says the right words, not unless there were 400 sober witnesses, all in Dillingham, nobody has to be flown anywhere, everybody has a current phone number, everybody can be contacted. So now, because there is too much of a case load, there are too many other crimes to balance. This is, as far as I can tell with my experience, this is directly dependent on finances. And it's dependent on the state's budget, and that budget changes with every single governor. And they do have to make state budget cuts, and I understand that. But this is what I believe now: we had a few

good years over there for victim rights and we're going to go right back to being victim rights repressive. It's fiscally driven.

If this scenario wasn't bleak enough, last December, the Department of Law announced that it will close the Dillingham DA's office at the end of the fiscal year. The two positions that were cut in last June apparently only represented the first phase of a massive reallocation of state legal resources. When the Dillingham office is closed, all cases will be handled out of Anchorage, to be aided largely by the use of telephonic hearings.

In light of the changing tides in Bristol Bay, the community is at a critical point where it must re-evaluate its justice framework. A return to traditional and cultural methods of conflict resolution at the community level, such as restorative justice, may be an appropriate next move. Restorative justice, according to Braithwaite (1997), is "a process where all stakeholders involved in an injustice have an opportunity to discuss its effects on people and decide what is to be done to attempt to heal those hurts" (p. 246). Processes of restorative justice vary in form, consisting of family group conferences, healing and sentencing circles, visioning sessions and restorative probation, to name just a few modalities.

The restorative justice approach is one strategy for tribal people to reclaim responsibility and accountability in caring for their own, calling for the commitment of youth and members of their respective villages. There are a few isolated instances of this practice throughout rural Alaska, such as the Peacemaking Circle in Kake, Alaska (a Tlingit village in Southeast Alaska). Like many Alaskan villages, Kake had a serious problem with teen drinking and suicide, evidenced by 15 youth taking their lives in a two-year span in the 1980s. Realizing the limitations of the justice system to address this problem, a group of concerned residents of Kake organized the Healing Heart Council and Circle Peacemaking, a reconciliation and sentencing process embedded in Tlingit traditions (Hyslop, 2012). The Circle Peacemaking involved the

participation of local people and groups who rarely come together under the existing criminal justice system, including victims, offenders, families, friends, church representation, and other concerned citizens. The process allowed all relevant stakeholders to collectively respond to a particular crime or incident, creating an environment that fosters accountability, restoration, and healing back to their village after a harm was committed. In 2001, all youth charged with underage drinking completed the terms of their sentences, evidence of the success of this interconnected compact (Rieger, 2001). Though restorative justice tactics have been heralded as culturally-responsive to the needs of Alaska Natives, I don't believe these to be panacea for Native communities' troubles. Goel (2000) cautions that restorative justice strategies, such as peacemaking, should not be used to address issues of violence against women in Native communities until women are first given equal status and standing in their communities. It would be folly to presume that meaning ascribed to women's victimization derived from a restorative justice process would ipso facto produce a progressive understanding of gender relations and gendered violence. Busch (2002) argues that without an explicit commitment to challenging structural, cultural and political catalysts of subordination, older and limited understandings of gendered violence will prevail. Such caveats may explain some women's trepidation about promoting justice reforms that completely undercut retributive principles, including incarceration. This leads to a fundamental question: Is Bristol Bay ready to reform its current justice system? Certainly, the lack of structural and systems capacity of the criminal court, combined with a justice orientation that is not exclusively punitive, seems to indicate a ripeness of the community for such a shift toward restorative justice. But are these efforts fruitless without acknowledging and resolving the inferior status of women first? Can the successes and lessons learned of other communities' efforts to implement restorative justice strategies be

leveraged to optimize Bristol Bay's movement toward justice reformation? These are important issues for the community and people to consider.

I realize that this work concludes with more questions than answers, much in the same ways that my conversations with women concluded. If the contexts and causes of this social ill are complex, it follows that any action to temper these problems would be even more complex. The women all acknowledged this in their own way, which I originally took as a sign of hopelessness. Today, I'm a bit more optimistic of the potential for change. In closing, I end with a tall order prescribed by Nancy, who pointed to the needs of gender equity, collective consciousness, family reintegration, cultural pride, and equality as necessary precursors to making families and communities whole again:

I think it's not just the women. They need to have some pride in themselves and the men need to have the family values again. But in that family value, they need to accept their family, male or female, as an equal. That's the biggest order in the world and the hardest one to meet. The only people that can do that is the family. It has to come out of the family. I started healing when I was on the wellness committee and we had SAFE coming out and sharing. The village was coming out together and sharing. The villages need to get their culture—it doesn't have to come back, but the kids need to know who they are and be *proud* to be Yup'ik, Tlingit, whatever—they need to be proud and themselves and treat each other as equals. It's not going to be a simple task.

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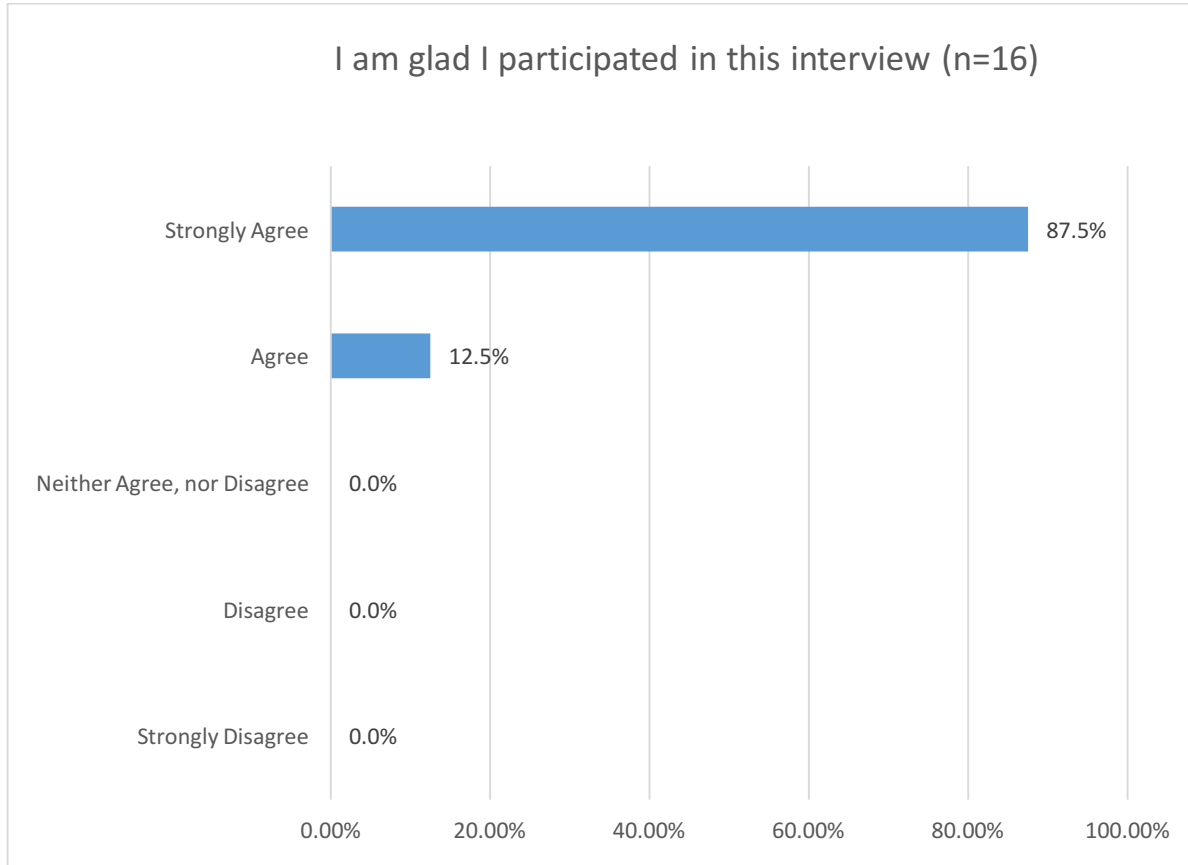
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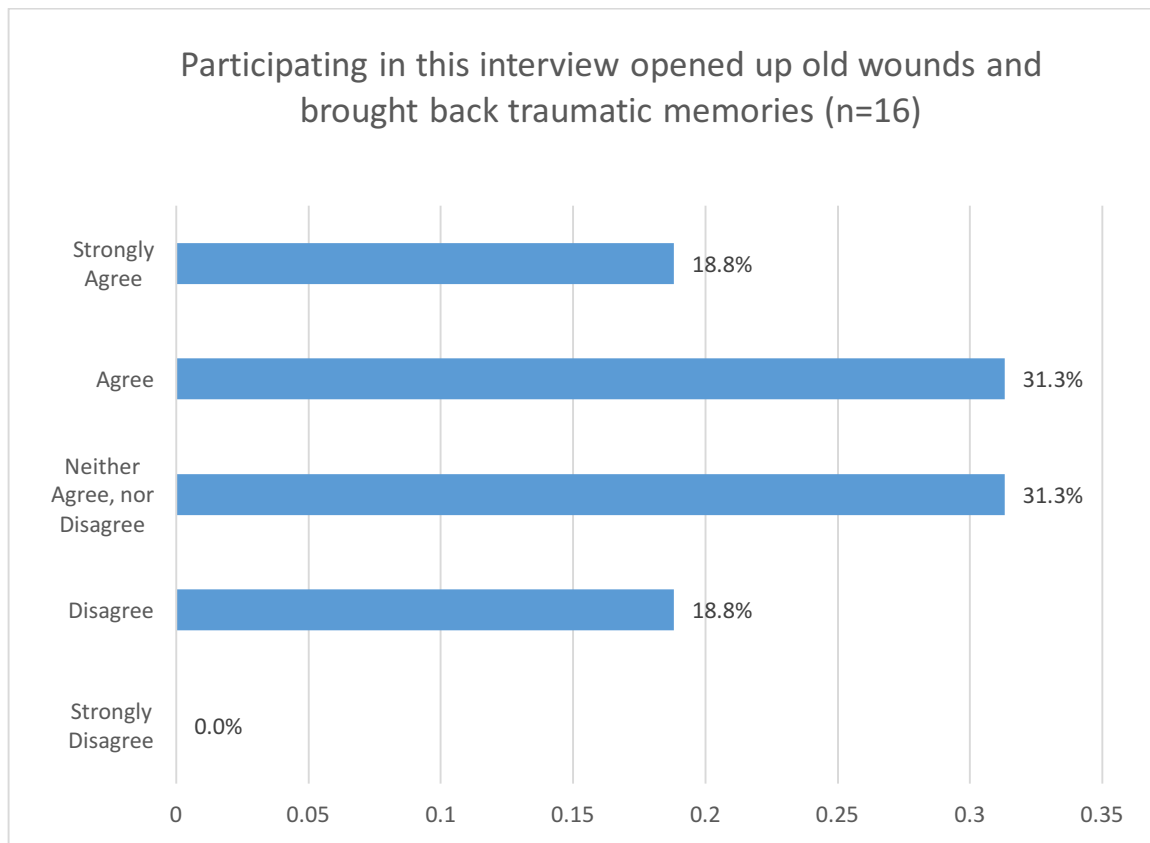
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APPENDIX I: POST-INTERVIEW SURVEY RESULTS



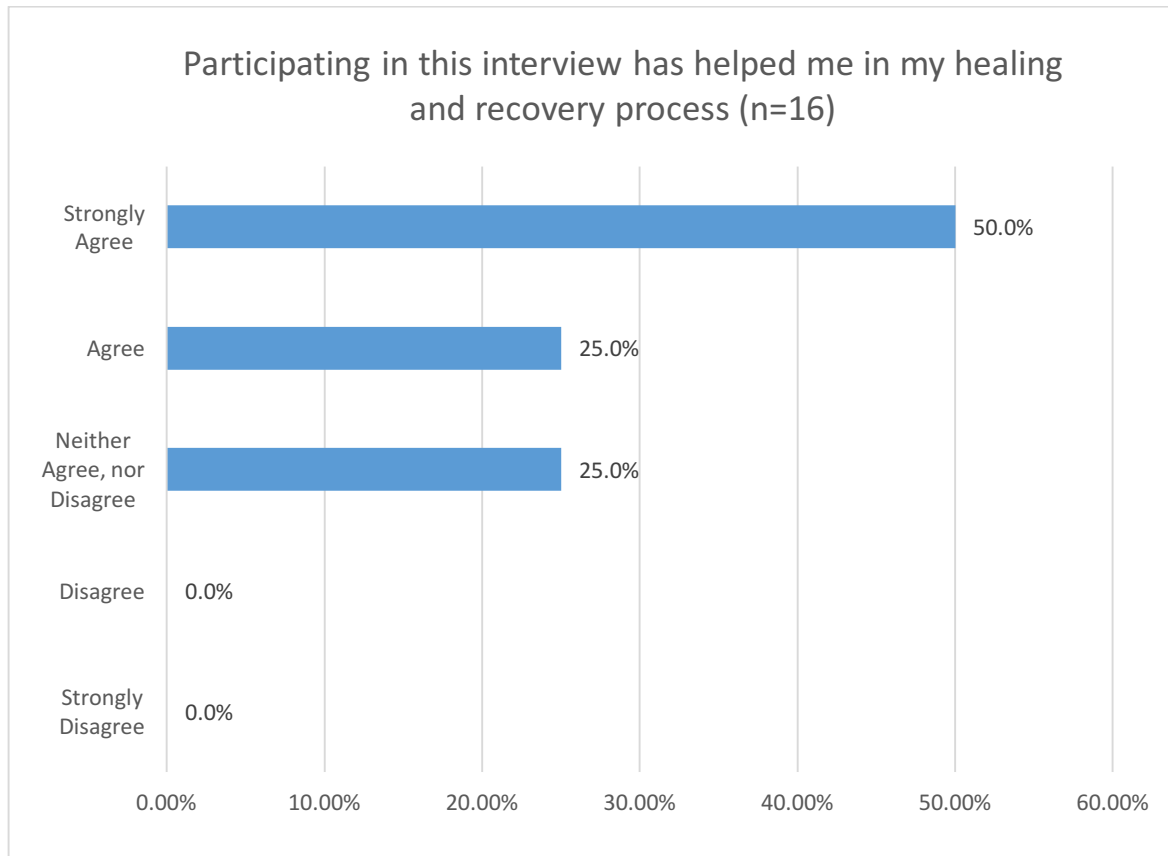
Qualitative Feedback

- If it helps others, I'm happy.
- This interview brought back memories, but not in a bad way.
- this was a very good healing process for me to close that chapter in my book of life.
- Loved to be apart of it!
- I was hesitant at first to participate with the survey but was glad I did
- Voicing my story and experiences was empowering and I was able to participate in something that will help other people and victims in one way or another.
- nice to get it out of myself



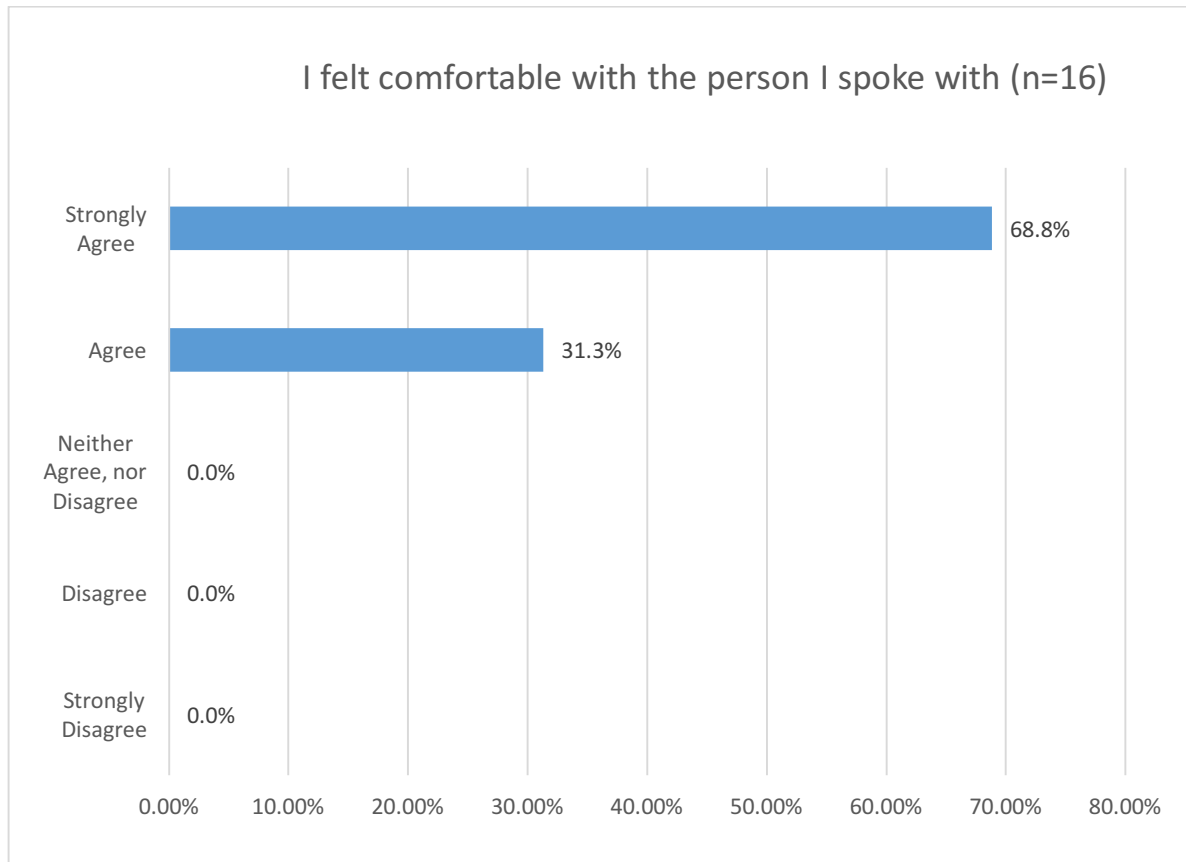
Qualitative Feedback

- The opening of old wounds was not traumatic and I was only somewhat effected for about 24 hours.
- Now I don't need to be ashamed about it, I can share. I know I'm not alone.
- Felt more like visiting familiar scars that were healed.
- Helped me heal more than anything
- I had no one that would believe me. Also it was like don't tell anyone. Hush, hush.
- Well needed
- Each time I talk about my story, it is like it happened yesterday
- Whatever I have been through good and/or bad in the past has made me who I am today. The outcome of my future will be based on the choices I will make despite the traumas I have been through.



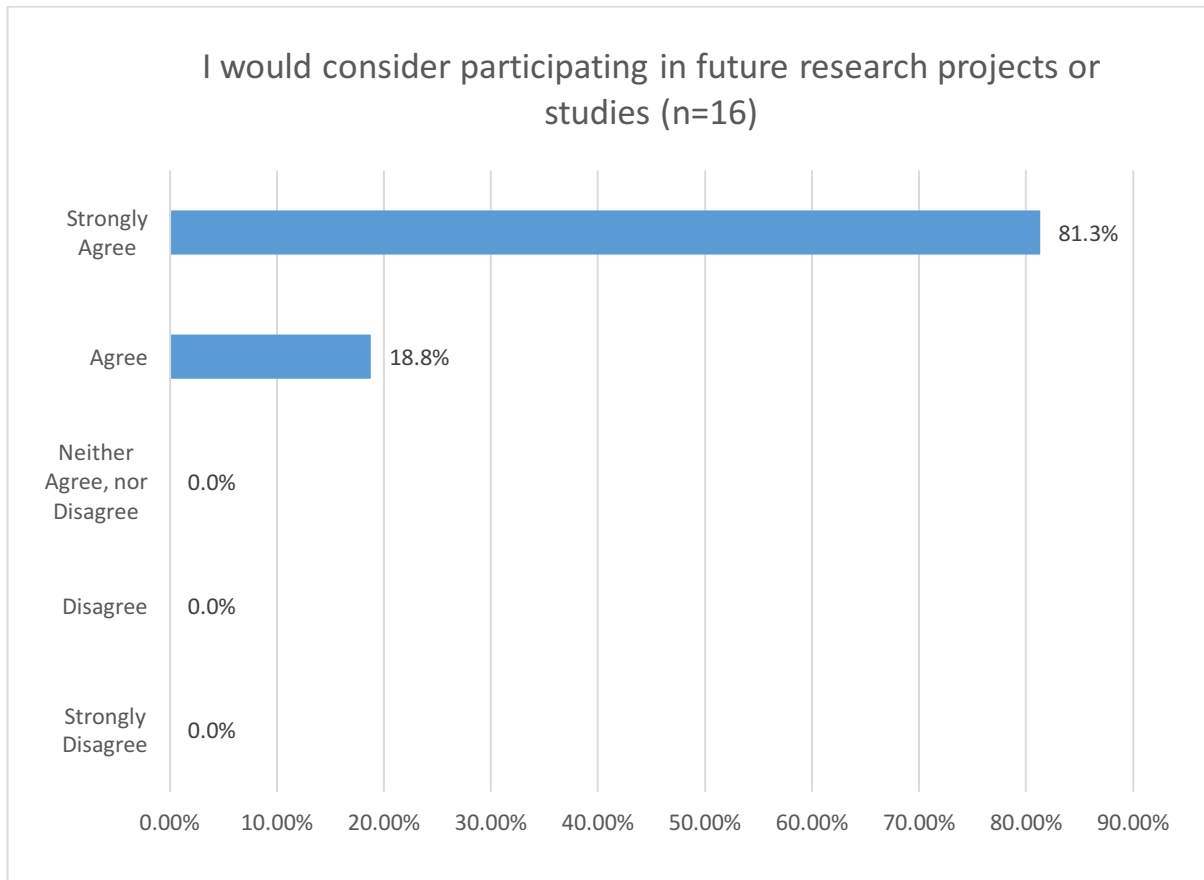
Qualitative Feedback

- The incident happened several years ago and I have had counseling since then.
- The more I talk about my trauma, the stronger I feel
- In need to let past trauma out.
- Each time I am able to share to another human being who is sincere and shows care it helps with my healing and recovery journey
- a form of release



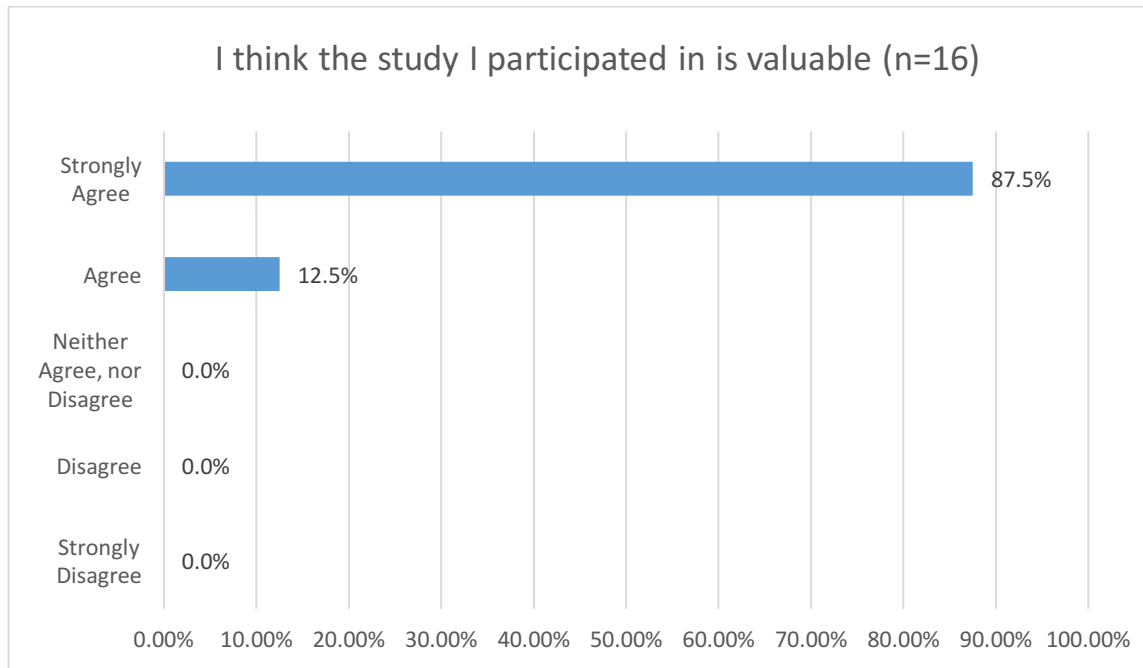
Qualitative Feedback

- He was gentle and non-judging
- Was helpful for a female with me
- Was nervous at first but he conducted the interview in an organized, respectful manner. Thank-you.
- He took me back to my childhood but didn't leave me there.
- Listened and cared about my feelings



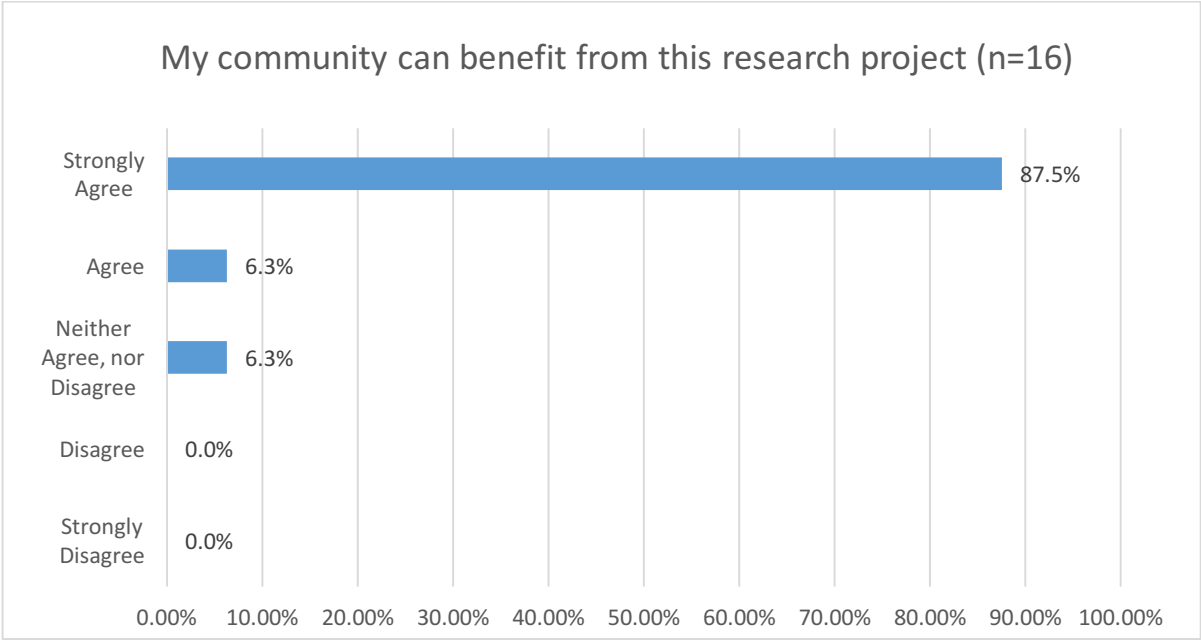
Qualitative Feedback

- I would love to open up to others and help them out too.
- If I can help, I will
- Happy to do more. Maybe I can help other victims.
- If there were any other way I can help I would be willing.
- To help others



Qualitative Feedback

- It is worth it, and does mean a lot to me. Getting the help I need and some day I can do the same.
- We need to talk about it, prevent it.
- Helped me a lot
- No matter how many times I hear people tell me that I am not alone this interview showed me that there are more people who really do care about us then we ever will know.



Qualitative Feedback

- This depends on how the information is distributed.
- Because other victims not knowing who can be trusted
- it is a real problem in community

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introductory statement and Informed Consent

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me. As you may know, I am speaking to Alaska Natives who have experienced rape, sexual assault, or other forms of sexual violence. During this interview, I will be asking questions on a number of topics. Some topics will be fairly harmless and not difficult to discuss. Other topics may be more sensitive. I want to make sure you are aware that you do not have to answer any question that you would rather not answer, you are free to end this session at any point, and everything you tell me will be treated as confidential. I want to emphasize that this is a confidential interview and your identify will not be linked to any information you provide. I also want to assure you that I am asking these questions as a part of a scientific study and with the hopes that this research can help address a range of problems in the community.

Before we begin, I will need for you to review this informed consent statement. This goes over everything I just told you and I will need your signature to move forward with the interview. If you agree with everything on this statement, please sign your name at the bottom where indicated. If you would like, we can make a photo-copy of this form that you can take with you. May we begin?

Questions about Family

- I would like to first begin by talking about your family. Let's first begin by talking about your parents
 - Did you grow up with both a mother and father present?
 - If parent absent, what happened to him/her
 - What did your parents do for work?
 - Tell me about your relationship with your parents
 - What were the "house rules?"
 - Was there discipline in your household?
 - What did that look like?
 - Did you feel close to your parents?
 - Are both your parents still alive?
- Let's now move onto talking about your grandparents
 - How much were your grandparents around while you were growing up?
 - Did any grandparents live in your house while you were growing up?
 - Did a grandparent assist in raising you?
 - Are you grandparents (paternal and maternal) still alive?
 - How close did you feel to your grandparents growing up?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters?
 - Tell me about sibling(s) (age, younger/older, etc)
 - How close did you feel to your sibling(s) growing up?
 - Do you still feel close to your sibling(s)?
- Did other family members had a big role in your upbringing?
- Who did you feel closest to growing up?
 - What made that relationship special?

- All families are different in terms of the values they place on different customs, traditions, etc. Generally, can you tell me a little bit about your family’s values?
 - Was education valued?
 - Would you consider your family religious? Spiritual?
 - How so?
 - In particular, did your family have any specific expectations of girls?
 - Did your family think about boys and girls differently?
- I’m going to name off a list of distressing events that sometimes occur in families. I would like to know which of these events, if any, you experienced, as well as what family members have been affected by these events.
 - Unemployment/financial hardship
 - Alcohol/Drug Abuse
 - Physical Child Abuse
 - Child Sexual Abuse
 - Imprisonment
 - Terminal Illness
 - Suicide
 - Murder

Questions about Identity (i.e. Native American)

- Do you have a tribal affiliation?
- To you, what does it mean to be TRIBAL AFFILIATION?
- When did you become aware of your heritage? How?
 - What was your reaction upon discovering your American Indian identity?
- Do you participate in any of your tribal customs or practices?
 - If yes, elaborate
 - If no, why not?
- How has being a Native American Indian impacted your life?
 - Do you think anything about your race or culture or identity is associated with why you are currently at SAFE?
- Is it important for you to be with people from your own tribe? Why?

Questions about Community (Create an “opening”)

- Tell me about the community/village where you were living prior to your coming to SHELTER NAME?
 - PROBE: Were you born there? Were you raised there?
- Were you active in your community? What did you do to “keep busy?”
 - PROBE: social groups, church groups, neighborhood programs, social committees, etc
- How “invested” did you feel in that community? In other words, how much did you care about the daily happenings of the community?
- What was it like growing up there?
 - PROBE: Every community has its good points and bad ones. Can you tell me about the best things growing up in that community?
 - PROBE: Can you tell me about some the challenges growing up there?
 - Isolation

- Depression
 - Looking back on growing up in that community, was there anything about living there that made you sad/blue?
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Low income
- Household
 - Did you share a bedroom with siblings or anyone else?
 - Did extended family live in your house?
- Social support
- Communication/language barriers
 - How easy was it for you to communicate with others?
- Educational barriers
 - Do you think you received a good education?
 - Can you tell me about your teachers?
- Tell me about people you consider close to you in that community. This can include your friends, acquaintances, co-workers—anyone you feel close to
 - How much do you feel they care about you?
 - How much do they understand the way you feel about things?
 - How much do they appreciate you?
 - How much can you talk to them about your worries?
 - How much can you relax and be yourself around them?
- Do you feel you can depend/lean on people you feel close to when you're facing a difficult challenge or situation?
 - Who can lend you money if you needed it in an emergency?
 - Who could lend you a car or drive you somewhere if there was an emergency?
 - Who could give you a place to stay if there was an emergency?
 - Who could you count on to check in on you regularly if there was an emergency?
- Do you consider your community to be a safe place? Why or why not?

Questions about Perceptions of Sexual Violence and Safety

- **Is violence a problem in your community?**
 - **What type of violence?**
 - **Does it happen to women?**
- Does this sort of violence happen to a lot of women in your community?
- Why do you think this sort of violence happens?
 - Is this type of behavior “ok” with the community?
 - Does the community care
 - Why do you think people commit violence?
 - Why do you think people commit sexual violence?
 - Is something “wrong” with people who commit sexual violence?
- Do you recall when you first learned about sexual violence?
 - When did you learn about the terms “rape,” “sexual abuse,” “inappropriate touching,” etc?
 - How did you learn about this?

- Prior to coming to SAFE, can you tell me about what you thought about women who experienced sexual violence?
 - Has that opinion changed?
- Are you aware that Alaska has the highest rate of sexual assault in the country?
 - Why do you think this might be?

Questions about Actual Victimization

- If it is ok with you, I would like to ask about the violence that brought you to SAFE. In as much or as little detail as you are comfortable with, tell me what happened. Can you tell me how you ended up coming here?
 - Were there drugs or alcohol involved? On who's part?
 - What was your relationship to the offender?
 - Did you call the police?
 - If yes, what happened after you called the police?
 - How did they treat you?
 - If no, why did you not contact the police?
 - Did you tell anyone else about the incident? (friend, family member, etc)?
 - How did they respond?
- Do you know what happened to NAME OF OFFENDER?
 - Were they arrested?
 - Were charges filed against them?
 - Were they convicted of a sexual offense?
 - Do you know the court disposition (i.e. did they go to jail, put on probation, ordered to treatment, etc)?
- Is there anything else that you think I should know in order to fully understand this?

Questions about Life Course History of Victimization

- Have you been to SAFE or any other shelter before?
- Had you been sexually abused prior to the incident we just discussed?
 - If yes, same questions as previous section

Questions about Justice

- As you look back on the event(s) that brought you to SAFE, how do you think this has affected your life?
- How can Alaska help women in similar situations?
- How should people who commit this type of crime be handled?
 - Punishment? How?
 - Treatment? How?
 - Reintegration? How?

Questions about Health

- How would you describe your overall health today? "Health" is however you choose to define it.
 - If specific problem is mentioned, ask for details regarding specific health problems.
 - If poor health, what contributes to your poor health?

- Tell me about health in your family, generally.
 - Parents?
 - Grandparents?
- Do you drink alcohol?
 - Have you ever been told you had a dependency problem, substance abuse problem, drinking problem, or an addiction to alcohol?
 - Do you believe you have a problem with alcohol? Why? What about other drugs?
- Have you ever engaged in risky sexual activities?
 - Sex without protection
 - Sex under the influence of alcohol
 - Sex with multiple partners
 - Sex with strangers
- Have you ever attempted suicide?
 - Was this attempt related to any of the things you shared with me about your abuse?

Questions about Services

- Everyone has their own unique needs and priorities. Can you tell me a little about your greatest needs at this point in your life? “Needs” are however you choose to define them.
 - Physical needs
 - Mental health needs
 - Economic needs
 - Spiritual needs
 - Help with relationships
 - Help with family/child-rearing
- Are these needs being met in SAFE?
- What kind of support would be helpful for your personal problems?
 - Traditional sources (medicine man, traditional Indian healers, Native American Church Services, etc)?
 - Other sources? (e.g. public support/welfare/WIC/food stamps, social services, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc)

General Demographic Questions

- Occupation
- Education background
- Family background
- Race
- Tribal affiliation
- Would your life be different if you had grown up and lived in a different community?
 - Would your current situation be different if you were living someplace else?

Closing Question

You have provided me with a lot of valuable information about your life today. Thank you so much for all your contributions. In light of everything we talked about today, I would like to know—what is the one thing you want people to understand about sexual violence here in Alaska?

Today we discussed a number of issues related to your life history and experiences in Alaska. These issues are important to understanding why and how violence occurs against women. “Asking the right questions” is an important component to this research, so I would like to know if you feel there’s any other important things to discuss. Are there any questions I didn’t ask that you feel I should?

At this point, I do not have any additional questions for you. Is there anything that you would like to ask me as far as this research project is concerned?

Thank you very much for your participation in this important interview. I would like to give you my business card. Please feel free to get in touch with me if you have any follow-up questions related to this interview, or if you would like to share further information that may come to mind later.