

Unequal exchange: western economic logic and Inuit/Qablunaat research relationships

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ABSTRACT. For some time, Inuit have made it clear that they wish to play a more substantial role in research with implications for themselves and their territory. To understand how researchers communicate and relate to each other, cultural analysis is often employed. Although cultural differences are relevant to understanding problems in the conduct of research, limiting differences to these realities is overly deterministic and essentialist. Many differences arising in the research process are products of social constructions found in Canadian culture and, increasingly, in Inuit communities. The paper re-examines the complexities of cross-class relations, focusing on how different relations to money, as a proxy for other relations characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, consumption and commodification, impact Inuit interaction with western-educated researchers. Using the Nanisiniq Arviat History Project in the community of Arviat, Nunavut Territory Canada, as a case study, the paper is a qualitative analysis of miscommunication resulting from cross-class differences. The Nanisiniq project was a two-year participatory action research project bringing Inuit youth and elders together to rediscover, interpret and apply knowledge of their history and culture to contemporary social issues affecting them.

Introduction

The volume of research being conducted in Inuit Nunaat is considerable (Nunaat meaning ‘homeland’ in English) (Nunavut Research Institute 2012). In 2009, the last year for which data is available, the Nunavut Research Institute granted 145 research licences to projects in the physical, social, and health sciences. In *Negotiating research relationships with Inuit communities: a guide for researchers*, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunavut Research Institute urge researchers to include Inuit at all stages of the research continuum. The research involvement continuum suggests three levels in which Inuit can participate: project design, field work and data analysis.

Working together requires a certain level and kind of understanding between Inuit and *Qablunaat* (the Inuktitut word for someone who is ‘a southerner’ or western-European). ‘Level’ refers to language difficulties between *Qablunaat* and Inuit researchers arising because of the technical language and concepts associated with research activities. ‘Kind of understanding’ refers to cultural sensibilities and awareness. Jordan Konek (11 September 2011), one of the Inuk youth researchers, notes the gap between the realities of *Qablunaat* and Inuit. ‘People don’t get taught before they come here; people that haven’t understood what reality here is.’ This ‘reality’ is more complex and demanding than many researchers appreciate.

This paper deals with research relationships between Inuit and *Qablunaat* working on the Nanisiniq Arviat History Project, a collaborative effort of the Sivuliniut Elders Society and the School of Social Work, University of British Columbia (UBC) (For more information

visit the Nanisiniq: Arviat History Project’s blog site, <http://www.Nanisiniq.tumblr.com>). Inuit elders are those with years of wisdom and experience recognised and appreciated by other elders and the communities in which they live. Arviat is a predominantly Inuit community on the west coast of Hudson Bay, north of Churchill Manitoba, Canada. Its origins are as a Hudson’s Bay Company fur trading post with Anglican and Catholic missions dating back to the 1920s. Inuit moved or were relocated to the community from their coastal and inland camps, commencing in the mid-1950s.

The paper is based on a ‘close reading’ of conversations between Jordan Konek (Inuk youth researcher) and April Dutheil (research assistant). They reflect on their experience in this paper, assisted by Frank Tester of the University of British Columbia. Although similar in age, Dutheil and Konek, both young people from different regions of the Canadian north, have social values and worldviews different in regard to gender, first language, culture, socio-economic class, history and influence from elders. Using Konek and Dutheil’s Facebook conversations, we focus on miscommunications and misunderstandings arising from cultural and class-based differences.

In *From talking chiefs to native corporate elite*, Mitchell (1996) notes that researchers often treat research involving Inuit as a distinct category. Cultural differences become the focus of attention. This often gives rise to forms of essentialism; differences between people are attributed to culture, explicitly understood as innate but which, paradoxically, researchers and others often hope to change. Social, economic and political realities are ‘disappeared’, becoming socially benign. In this paper,

we focus on the *intersection* of cultural *and* class differences. The product of communication between Inuit and *Qablunaat* was (and often is) racism; the undermining and degradation of Inuit values, integrity and cosmologies and attempts to impose on Inuit, the values, norms and practices of a dominant Canadian culture. While this has and continues to take place overtly, the undermining of Inuit values and cosmology has occurred covertly for decades with the northern expansion of capitalist relations of production and consumption. The result is tension between Inuit cultural practices and the encroachment of values and 'ways of being' seen as necessary to functioning in an industrial economy and Westminster style of public administration.

In 2006 the median income of Inuit was approximately \$9,000 less than the median income of the general Canadian population, being \$25,955 (There was little difference between the median income earned by Inuit living in Inuit Nunaat (\$16,669) and Inuit living outside the north (\$17,673)) (Statistics Canada 2006). 51% of Inuit had less than a high school diploma. Only 4% had earned a university degree (Statistics Canada 2006). From the UBC the Nanisiniq research team consisted of two professors with doctoral degrees and one BA candidate. From Arviat the team included three college diploma candidates, two high school graduates, two high school diploma candidates and Inuit elders.

Culture and class have a problematic relationship. Inuit constitute a lower socio-economic class by virtue of their income levels and educational achievement. Whether it is fair to categorise Inuit this way is debatable, suggesting the limits of definitions focusing on education and income. Many Inuit are internationally renowned artists, musicians, politicians and entrepreneurs. They have what Bourdieu (1986) calls cultural capital. For many Inuit the concept of class is an imported one of little relevance to how their society was organised and how they currently view themselves.

Theoretical lens

Modes of production and the social relations to which they give rise are essential to understanding patterns of social organisation and inequality. The mode of capitalist production, as was true of feudalism and subsistence economies, impacts all social forms, including the organisation of families, education, health care and governance (Knuttila 2007). However, close attention to pre-capitalist forms of economic formation challenge interpretations of Marx's materialism that place 'men in the flesh', organising and acting to meet need, as the sole source of what people come to believe about themselves and their class being. As Roseberry (1997: 29) notes, the real contribution of Marx's materialism was to stress that people 'as they imagine themselves and as narrated or imagined by others could not be separated from (people) in the flesh', echoing Sahlins' (1976) criticism of philosophies that begin with practice and ignore the mediation

of a conceptual scheme. In considering the relationship of money to traditional Inuit sharing practices, these relationships are particularly important; more-so given the knowledge-based, post-modern nature of the labour and products associated with research, and the relationship of Inuit youth with new social media. Money, what it is and the practices entailed in its acquisition, influences and is influenced by pre-existing social relations; the cultural norms of Inuit culture and narrations from outside.

However, capitalism gives rise to societies fractured in unique ways and characterised, depending on the strength of other and pre-existing logics, by class-related differences originating in relations to people defined as labour (Knuttila 2007). The alienated labour Marx outlines in *The economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844* is relevant to understanding the transition from a trapping and trading economy to mining and the industrial employment Inuit now face. Whether or not Inuit, as Mitchell (1996) argues, were a class-less society is debateable. Differences were differently defined, not only in relation to the exploitation of organised labour and generation of surplus value, material circumstances, but in relation to the conceptual schemes to which Sahlins (1976) refers. Furthermore, Inuit society cannot be characterised (then or now) simply as egalitarian or communal. Inuit society was (and is) both cooperative and competitive, layered over by what Wenzel (2000: 63), in relation to Inuit of Clyde River Baffin Island, identifies as *ningiqtuq*—'a multi-layered strategy by which participants achieve the widest possible intra-community distribution of resources'.

Some scholars suggest that a two-tier class system now exists, with some Inuit (the majority) pursuing an 'adaptive economic mode' (Oswalt 1979: 290) and others constituting a 'native elite' (Mitchell 1996). The adaptive economic mode refers to participation in a mixed economy consisting of wage labour and welfare, with intermittent hunting and fishing. The 'native elite' refers to an Inuit ruling class, able to access capital by its connections to institutions and structures. But 'elites' can also be defined in reference to culturally-defined positions as heads of family units or as elders, having access to resources and the labour of extended family members. The process of class formation is never complete. The result is tension between the social and cultural obligations that define 'being Inuk', and the individualism, competition and capital accumulation that define successful adaptation to western (and capitalist) logic (Mitchell 1996).

The transition to a class-based society, defined relative to a capitalist mode of production, is non-linear and imperfect. As Mitchell (1996: 22) puts it, '... the capitalist mode of production may or may not need labour, land, or resources. Historically, Inuit land and resources, seen in relation to the logic of capital accumulation, in which colonial enterprise played an important role, were needed. Inuit labour was also needed in the case of whaling and

the fur trade, but with the decline of the fox fur trade after World War II, Inuit labour had little or no place to go. There was no impetus for its incorporation into the Canadian working class.' Consequently, the period 1945–1970 might be called the welfare-dependent period of Inuit social history. While some Inuit found industrial employment, the '70s were marginally populated by employment opportunities. The pessimism of this period was captured by anthropologist Diamond Jenness.

...char, nor salmon, nor any other fish or mammal in the Arctic ... [can] withstand the drain of large-scale commercial exploitation. ...beyond the tree-line there are not other exploitable resources except perhaps oil and minerals, which the Eskimo themselves are unable to develop because they lack both the knowledge and the capital (Jenness 1964: 110).

An industrial economy, first introduced with construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line and a mine at Rankin Inlet on the west coast of Hudson Bay in the mid-1950s, has different implications. The DEW Line was a string of radar stations built across the Canadian Arctic by the Americans in 1956–1957 as part of cold war fears of Russian bombers approaching North America over the pole. Unlike fox trapping or whaling, mining requires skills not based on traditional practices. Participation requires training in institutions proffering *Qablunaat* logic. The clock becomes important. Settlement life makes necessary the exchange of money for goods and services. Diminished economic independence and a compromised ability to participate in introduced relations of production and consumption intersect with social distress brought about by colonial experiences, residential schooling notable among them, a tenuous and inconsistent demand for Inuit labour (as mines open and close in response to economic conditions and depletion of ore bodies), geographical isolation from labour opportunities (government departments and jobs located somewhere other than one's home community), and Inuit resistance to a way of living challenging extended family relations and obligations (Mitchell 1996). The lack of demand for Inuit labour, in part, explains the persistence of Inuit culture and modes of economic subsistence. Incomplete participation in capitalist relations, for reasons noted, has prevented Inuit from achieving levels of socio-economic well-being experienced and defined by the colonising culture (Statistics Canada 2006).

Inuit experience is not unique. Post-colonial experiences and awkward transformations have occurred internationally (van der Geest 1997; Varman and Belk 2008), driven by the same forces operating in Nunavut Territory; the presence of junior players in the mining industry and large-scale interests. In what follows, we discuss the role of money in this transition; a notable difference for some Inuit youth being that their relationship to labour is associated with post-modern forms of production associated

with research and the production of information coupled with the use of new social media.

Money

Inuit youth researchers on the Nanisiniq project were issued stipends to acknowledge their effort and contribution. The assumption was that youth would be learning. Therefore a student stipend was adequate. Another assumption was that motivation for participating would be altruistic; a chance to contribute to the discovery of Inuit social history and culture, and its documentation from an Inuit perspective. Stipends were consequently small, varying between \$300 and \$500 per month, depending on level of participation. Decisions about these amounts were made in consultation with the Inuk Arviat co-ordinator, the research assistant and, from time-to-time, elders. Honoraria were paid to elders and youth interviewed by Inuit youth researchers.

Attitudes towards money vary among socio-economic classes (Bonsu 2008; Durvasula and Lysonski 2010; Falicov 2001; Gombay 2010; Medina and others 1996; van der Geest 1997; Varman and Belk 2008). In communities with high rates of poverty the transaction of small amounts plays a significant role in peoples' daily lives. In the early 1900's sociologist George Simmel argued that money plays a dysfunctional role in society. Following Marx, he noted that pursuit of money fosters individualism and contributes to impersonal relationships and social rifts among individuals (Simmel 1900). Money distorts the motivating factors and behaviours driving individuals to pursue particular goals (Simmel 1900). Studies examining the relationships between employers and employees note that money can be used effectively as an instrument to affect behaviour and performance (Durvasula and Lysonski 2010). The social dysfunction and validity of exchanges that may result when money is used to pay someone for personal information, or as part of a process of developing partnerships and trust, merit consideration. What happens to the content of information when it is treated as a commodity?

Once an activity is defined primarily in economic, rather than social or cultural terms, it is governed by a different set of principles and assumptions that can change, in the mind of individuals, an activity's goals and how the rationale informing them is understood (Gombay 2010). While social or cultural (altruistic) 'reasons for doing things', an element of E.P. Thompson's (1966) moral economy, do not entirely disappear, the importance of money, particularly in a population that is economically disadvantaged, plays a role easily overlooked by researchers who take their own privilege for-granted. Economies are ideological systems that create and reinforce certain values. The conversion of public and collective services to private responsibility. For example, the pressure to privatise health care services being a prime example, is a macro instance of this process (Armstrong 2007; Root 2007). Capitalism is a totalising

system attempting to define cultural and social relations that, once defined within the precepts of capitalist logic, are to be taken for granted by those operating within it (Knuttila 2007).

Southerners appear to be rich because Inuit are still learning to understand how society works. How all humans are pretty much the same. We're on the same level, we have the same feelings and we go through the same situations. We're just learning the norms of socializing (J. Konek, 25 September 2011).

This quote refers to a process of social change and learning. It reveals anxieties over class differences to which these changes give rise. Konek's claim that: 'We're on the same level ...' suggests what is threatened by these relations; the egalitarian aspirations of Inuit culture. The 'norms of socializing' refers to learning and understanding the rules, regulations and expectations of western European society and culture.

The move toward a society in which money demarks success, power, status and the ability to pay one's rent and buy food, has given rise to mixed and contradictory relationships towards money (Gombay 2010). Attitudes toward money vary according to gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, family cycle, education, and socio-economic class (Bonsu 2008; Falicov 2001). Medina and others (1996) suggest that class impacts attitudes toward money in a number of ways. People with less western education are more obsessed, worried and emotional about money, compared to individuals with higher levels of western education. Given the relationship between education and income, this comes as no surprise. Peoples' economic experiences are reinforced through the norms, expectations, and contexts of others in the same economic class. The nature of community, the importance of shared histories and the geographical isolation of Inuit communities suggest that some generalisations about the status of money in Inuit communities are possible (Gombay 2010; Medina and others 1996).

In Inuit culture, class (defined in relation to wealth and education), is a moneyed concept or, to put it the other way around, money is a class concept. This is almost singularly so, with some notable exceptions in a culture where there is considerable equalisation with regard to education, the other variable commonly used to define class. While young people may have more education than their elders or parents, in a setting where experience, land-based and mechanical skills, not necessarily associated with formal education, confer a measure of prestige and respect, money is left to bracket or set some Inuit aside, albeit not necessarily in the command mode associated with having money in *Qablunaat* culture. Having money has a history in Inuit culture, where cash was, historically, a commodity in short supply. As Riches (1975) notes, it conferred on those holding it a measure of prestige, permitting them to purchase luxury

goods from visitors and traders outside of the Hudson Bay Company token economy system. Wenzel (2000) illustrates the modern-day equivalent in the case of the daughter of the head of an extended family who contributed money, through her father, to support the hunting of her younger male sibling who was also co-resident in her home. The young woman was both highly important (the privilege and status associated with having money) and considerably disadvantaged (having little control over her privilege) by such sharing, a conflagration of the privilege associated with having money (an emerging demarcation of class), and privilege (in the case of her father) associated with Inuit cultural norms, expectations and traditions. Money, as a sign of class and privilege, was a factor in the relationships and perceptions that developed between Inuit and *Qablunaat* participants in the course of the Nanisiniq project.

Class and communication

In communicating feelings, ideas, expectations and observations, individuals locate themselves in multiple ways depending on perceptions of their social contexts (Ablonczy-Mih'alyka 2008; Medina and others 1996). Once an individual communicates, the way in which this information is interpreted and imagined is influenced by the background and orientation of the receiver; including the ways in which people imagine themselves in relation to the production, the 'men (sic) in the flesh', to which Marx refers (Roseberry 1997: 29). When contexts differ significantly, the possibilities for misunderstanding are considerable (Ablonczy-Mih'alyka 2008; Medina and others 1996). Reducing the risk of misinterpretation and conflict between *Qablunaat* researchers and Inuit community members depends, in large measure, on making sense of interclass communication.

Problems with use of written communication

Due to the remoteness of Arviat from Vancouver, communication for the Nanisiniq Project was most often by email. Social media, Skype, and telephone were also employed. Webcam and Skype was rarely used because of poor internet connections in Arviat. The use of email removes verbal and non-verbal cues from exchanges. The expressive capacity of written communication is limited. With this in mind, the following message suggests the role of class in written communication.

I know we can understand English and can read English, the point was that Inuit don't read books. We're verbally organized; verbally as in speaking only. ... A lot of Inuit also don't understand some of your higher English and professional speaking/writing skills (Konek e-mail message to Dutheil 5 August 2011).

'I know we can understand' is a declaration. The speaker establishes that he is knowledgeable and has a

right to speak with some authority; what one might expect from someone aware that he is dealing with people who have credentials. The speaker has a clear understanding that in *Qablunaat* society, knowledge, and the power that accompanies it, is 'booked'. Not only are cultural differences at play. These intersect with class considerations, conveyed by references to 'higher English and professional writing/speaking skills'. These suggest an appreciation of the division of labour to which credentials give rise. A case for the merit and strength of Inuit verbal communication (and egalitarianism, distinctions within Inuit culture not being referenced in a way paralleling the credentialism of *Qablunaat* society) is made. *Qablunaat* use of 'professional speaking/writing skills' is a way of acting out class. These skills organise labour with the assumption that a certain form of communication creates a professional (read effective and efficient) workplace. This assumption is highly questionable. Communication that is playful or casual, leaves 'space' for the recipient to interpret and learn in his or her own way and is intended to show respect for the feelings and experience of 'the Other' in the interests of building or maintaining good relations and sense of community, is probably more effective.

In another exchange, Konek observed:

If I come to the South and I don't know history, the Southerners will think I'm uneducated. But if [a southerner] came [to the Arctic] and he's not a hunter and he doesn't know how to survive, I'll think he won't live any longer. (Konek e-mail message to Dutheil, 1 February 2012)

Konek asserts that to live in the Arctic, certain values, knowledge and skills are required. This is also a clear statement about resistance. Inuit are and remain a hunting culture; one with skills making survival in a demanding environment possible. Konek contrasts these with what is expected of a successful person in *Qablunaat* society. Konek's point is that different knowledge is important to doing well, to surviving, in different cultural (and economic) contexts. Furthermore, what is important? Inuit skills are fundamental to survival. Without them, 'he won't live any longer.' A lack of historical knowledge may leave the *Qablunaat* 'uneducated'. What counts in Inuit culture is a different kind of knowledge; as important than the 'booked' knowledge conferring status on *Qablunaat* experts.

Misunderstandings and distrust of questions about money

In addition to elders, young Inuit from Arviat were interviewed. Inuit youth researchers gave honoraria to elders. Before conducting interviews with young Inuit, the research team did not discuss what interviewees would receive as honoraria. Dutheil assumed that Inuit youth would not receive honoraria, given their limited knowledge compared to elders. Inuit youth re-

searchers assumed that youth would be paid for interviews. These assumptions and miscommunications gave rise to interesting discussions about the *value* of knowledge.

Dutheil: ... When we first did the interviews with the youth, there were some expectations that the youth would receive the same amount of honorarium as the Elders - \$50. Why do you think the group felt that youth should be given the same amount of money as Elders for their time? (April Dutheil Facebook message to Konek, 27 September 2011)

Konek: ... I'm wondering where this is going. Who's going to read this? I feel like Inuit are 'a family'. Don't mean to be rude. But one thing is that why are we talking about how we are 'expecting money' I really don't feel like answering that question. I'm sure you would feel the same. This kind of feels like we're doing this to make Inuit look bad when it comes to money ... that they - they're only looking for money. I'll be glad to answer that too as well but it's [definitely] not making sense to why we're going back to [money]... (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011)

The same would be true for many *Qablunaat* researchers, understands the amount paid to elders as a sum paid to individuals. Furthermore, there is a relationship between the amount paid and the value of the *product* being purchased. The wisdom of elders is worth something. The ideas and comments of youth may be interesting, but given their stage in life, they should not have expectations for remuneration paralleling those of respected community elders. This is consistent with the way such determinations are made in a capitalist economic system. Scarcity is related to value. Youth under 18 years of age constitute 47% of the Inuit population. Elders over 70 are few, their historical experience unique—and fast disappearing.

Konek's response is complex. He wonders 'where this is going'. Distrust of a conversation about money is expressed (Who's going to read this?). The reason becomes apparent. The difference in the logic applied to paying youth makes the difference between Inuit and *Qablunaat* culture obvious. 'Inuit are a family'; '... that (is) why we are talking about how we are "expecting money"'. Konek does not elaborate on the statement 'Inuit are a family', but the implications are clear. Payment is not for a *product*. And money is not easily regarded as individual property. If elders give money to youth when asked (which they regularly do), paying youth is tantamount to paying elders. Money is a family, not an individual, matter. The reference to and highlighting of 'expecting money' shows insight into the possibility that *Qablunaat* see Inuit as *just* expecting money without a legitimate rationale for their expectations. This is a profound insight, recognising that the criteria *Qablunaat* use for making such a determination are different from those

of Inuit. Consequently, *Qablunaat* are likely to find Inuit expectations unreasonable. Not answering the question appears as a strategy for dealing with the risks of doing so, and of being misunderstood or having one's cultural logic made the subject of critical analysis. 'Who is going to read this?' Konek at this stage has a good working relationship with Dutheil. While there is still room for misunderstanding, the question suggests that Konek is more concerned about the capacity of *others* to grasp any logic he might advance. This is a risky conversation. Konek's reluctance to talk about money suggests that raising the issue runs the risk of revealing the fact of poverty, unemployment and class differences and the justifiable need Inuit have to take full advantage of any opportunity for financial reward. Class differences and cultural realities intersect (Furnham 1984; Mitchell 1996).

Participatory-action research (PAR) is advanced by researchers and funding agencies as important to the participation of aboriginal communities. Principles of social justice and equal participation in design and determining how a project unfolds are central to PAR. However, criteria governing to whom grants are given, how and by whom research funds are managed and administered, can make financial dimensions of well-intended projects a source of unequal social exchange. In this case, while every attempt was made to consult and share financial information, power ultimately lay with the principal investigator and the university's finance department. When requisitions for stipends took up to six weeks to be processed or, as happened on a few occasions, became lost in the system, community participants expressed some doubt about the *Qablunaat* researchers' sincerity and integrity.

Sometimes personal cheques were written to deal with such situations. Early in the project, mistrust due to delayed receipt of stipends may have been the reason why some youth would not answer emails or attend meetings, only communicating if there was a problem with their cheque. As the Nanisiniq Project progressed, Inuit participants came to appreciate that delay in paying stipends was related to a structural bureaucracy over which the research team had little control. The legacy of researchers who did not follow through with their promises provides context (Voyageur and Callioun 2007). For example, in Arviat, a researcher had previously interviewed elders about a tragic event and promised to make available a book he was writing about the incident. It had not been seen. Follow-up revealed that the book was only available in French and not accessible to Inuktitut or English-speaking Inuit in the community.

Orientation toward money

Further response to Dutheil's question about why Inuit youth should expect money for interviews produced this statement from Konek:

I don't think the word 'expect' should be used on this one. It's kind of a shame to use it anyways when

it comes to money... I'm not blaming no one for anything, but it's something that people should learn. We're not expecting anything, but we're being taught to expect something from someone. It's something silent that a lot of people are doing, it doesn't make sense huh? I know. (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011)

While 'expecting something' is somewhat degrading—as implied by the idea that it's a 'shame' to use this phraseology, Konek notes that 'we're (Inuit youth) being taught to expect something from someone'. A conflict related to transition is suggested. In Inuit culture, doing something one has *chosen* to do is not accompanied by the expectation of reward. People do things for one another because of family and other obligations and commitments. But the relationship with 'outsiders', of whom there are increasing numbers, leaves money as the medium standing in for what might otherwise be activities conducted in accord with family and community obligations. The impact of money is far-reaching. Inuit note that it is difficult to find people to 'volunteer' in their communities. People want (and in fairness, often need) to be paid. Nevertheless, for youth like Konek, aware of his culture and how it should (and used to) operate, expectations of financial reward, and feeling 'okay' about those expectations, are uncomfortable realities. Class relations, the reality of being poor and needing money, complicate the picture. The dependency of Inuit on outside capital is illustrated by this comment:

Why are [Inuit youth] feeling they should get some money? Well, if you feel that 'wealthy people' are funding you and you have some needs or wants, why not just ask for it? It's all these simple things we can think about. If I were the interviewee what would I think? Well they're a big group, meaning they might have money and I think I should get a bit of it and to me it's all understandable. (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011)

Dependency relations have a long history. The characterisation of Ennadai (Iharmuit) Inuit as 'dependent' played a significant role in their tragic relocation and the deaths of some Inuit at Henik Lake in the winter of 1957–1958 (Tester and Kulchyski 1994). Their descendants currently live in Arviat where the Nanisiniq project was based. Characterising relations as dependent says more about the fears and social constructions of the colonising culture than the attitude of Inuit; captured nicely by the egalitarian assumptions in this quote. It's quite simple. You have more than I (or we) do, so it makes sense for you to share what you have. *Qablunaat* have lots of money so sharing it is the reasonable thing to do. Money is a relationship, not simply the price paid for a commodity (information). As 'wealthy people', why shouldn't *Qablunaat* be inclined to share?

Confusion between an expectation of entitlement based on the principle of sharing (If someone has money

to offer, what's wrong with taking it?), and the introduced concept of being deserving (being 'deserving' poor or having a valuable product for sale) complicates the role of money in Inuit culture. Gombay (2010) argues that an increasingly central role for money is reforming Inuit sharing relationships and cultural norms around country foods. Like populations in the south, working-class Inuit have learned to take advantage of food support systems and other forms of welfare as strategies for dealing with the hardships of settlement living, having limited means to access land-based resources and changes in the ethic of sharing. Paying Inuit researchers and informants is more than the simple (or not so simple) matter of issuing a cheque.

Volunteerism and payments to youth and elders

Money alters the relationship between elders and youth. Geest (2007) observes that in rural Ghana, impacted by capitalist relations of production and consumption paralleling Inuit experience, money also alters relationships between elders and youth. Historically, Inuit youth took direction from elders. Their knowledge was important to survival in a demanding Arctic environment (Gombay 2010). Today, for Ghanaians and Inuit youth alike, the perception is that elders have little to offer of relevance to the world youth inhabit. What counts is money. What is important has a price tag. Much time and attention, once spent learning how to hunt or how to make and repair implements and clothes, is now spent in front of a computer screen (which must be purchased) confronting an endless landscape of things to be purchased. Money is '... a lever, turning the traditional [structure of Inuit culture] on its head' (van der Geest 2007: 550). Capitalist relations of production and consumption and the commodity form undermine traditional social relations, internationally.

Research involves collecting information. When money is exchanged for information, as when researchers interview Inuit elders, commodification of information becomes an issue. When artwork is commodified, the expectations of consumers affect the artistic process and results. It has been well-documented that the content and meaning of art shifts in response to market forces (Bellengee-Morris 2002). Should we expect anything else when information becomes a commodity? Sacred knowledge and information are fundamentally changed when these become commodities (Ronwanièn:te Jocks 1996).

Simmel suggests that to preserve social relationships, money transactions should only occur between people who have no social relations with one another. Money exchanges, he argues, risk destroying social relationships between related people (Simmel 1900). Dutheil approaches the matter of paying elders and others for interviews with this in mind. Interacting with Konek, she approaches questions about payment with a preface steeped in Western notions of volunteerism and a frustration borne of struggles with her own culture and its failure to deliver on what it promises: that a good education will

be followed by a good job. Dutheil's rationale is steeped in the realities of a culture and world revealed by an education far removed from the realities of Konek. She starts her conversation by addressing Konek's perception, previously noted and further discussed in what follows, that being *Qablunaat* and being able to come to Arviat to do research, she must be well-off (rich), or at least far better off than most Inuit youth:

So when I came to Arviat it was a very different experience being 'rich'. Most of the winter clothes I had I borrowed from relatives and most of the money I spent was from the University or the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It wasn't actually mine. ... The thing about wealth in this world and having money, there are a few very, very rich people in the world. The majority of the world has very little, and sometimes even close to nothing. Students go to University because they hope that if they get an education they will be able to get a job, buy things - this is one way to survive.

Some students even do things that they are passionate about and hope that if they find something that is really worth doing, their interest in it will help them to be successful. Like, if you love doing something enough, you can find a way to survive off of it. This is kind of what I do. ... For example, I am really interested in northern health issues, so I try to get involved in things related to that. Why? Because I am passionate about it.

Why else? Because these days education is not enough. There are thousands and thousands of students in Canada who are really educated. ... But some still can't get a job! Why? Because it's very competitive. So what do young people do? They volunteer. They do things for free because that is one way of getting experience. They are still really smart, and could probably do the job, but if you don't have experience and credentials, it's unlikely that people will hire you. Why else do people volunteer? Because they love what they do and they want to give back to the community and improve our society, our world. When you volunteer (that is don't get paid) it's like you are sending a message to people that you care about this so much, that you would even do it if you weren't getting paid.

Why do you think youth in Arviat expect to be paid for the things they do? Why did the group want to pay youth interviewees \$50 for interviews? When I helped you at the dance (a teen dance held in the community) that time, by volunteering, why did you pay me and the others to 'help' you? (Dutheil Facebook message to Konek, 27 September 2011).

Dutheil's approach to money and volunteering is a conditioned response to circumstances beyond her control. Dutheil is operating in a society that has engineered

volunteerism as both a virtue and a way of locating oneself in hopes that one might ultimately be paid for what one does. Hanging in the background of her discussion with Konek is a degree of frustration borne of the observation that while she is expected to (in fact, has to) volunteer in order to 'get somewhere', Inuit youth have no comparable sense of the value (or necessity) of volunteering. They expect to be paid for everything they do, including efforts to document and preserve their own culture.

The concept of volunteerism is largely foreign to Inuit culture. One does things for others as a result of family (*ilagiit*) and some community obligations, most of which are related to food or the equipment necessary for its procurement. The concept of 'civic duty', which serves the accumulative functions of capitalism well, as in community work and the free labour of women, is a concept largely foreign to a culture in which obligations and responsibilities, as was true of Inuit camp life, are based on familial relations and obligations, not an overarching and abstract notion of 'society'.

In other contexts, money is not payment for work done or information given. Rather it is a form of recognition. As would be the case where caribou meat is given to an elder, it becomes symbolic; a sign of recognition and respect. What Dutheil overlooks is that money is so singularly associated with the rewarding of labour in Western culture that acts of generosity, also met by payment or an expectation of payment, run the risk of being debased. Volunteerism, an act set entirely aside from payment, is the only means left for demonstrating, unambiguously, one's commitment to a moral economy. In Inuit culture, money can be either payment for work done or, as suggested by Konek's response (below), have symbolic value related to recognition, honour and acknowledgement. Sharing (including money) 'is a form of Inuit social interaction that both binds people together and acts as a powerful symbol of those ties' (Stern 2005).

However, money does change relationships. This may explain why interviewing elders to whom one is related (and Inuit communities are about extended families), and paying the elder for the interview, is sometimes awkward for Inuit youth; all the more so because they are being paid to do the interview. While treating knowledge as a commodity raises ethical and philosophical questions, the benefits of honoraria for elders are obvious. These include contributing to the well-being of a generation that has suffered much and has special needs in relation to age. Payment is symbolic; an acknowledgement of historical injustices suffered, especially in the difficult decades after World War II (Tester and Kulchyski 1994).

The reason why I paid the people helping was because I felt I had a long day and the dance was a hard work for me. I felt that I should give something back to the people that helped me. Were you expecting me to pay you? Obviously not... I just wanted to show how honoured I am to have had you

guys helping me when the actual participants weren't there.

Let's say that you were someone that I really, really wanted to interview because you almost died in a plane crash . . . You were in that situation and I found you, and you lost a friend dog and it was really important to you. Then I came and finally found you and you had a lot of knowledge about that incident. I wanted to get in a detailed answer, not that we asked the Elders to talk in detail. But I wanted that from you and you gave me a real good answer, and I get paid a lot of money to get some words from you. Inuit Elders are not just people that lived in the past as you know it. They lost their loved ones, they nearly starved, they nearly froze and they were mistreated, and we are putting them back to the past where we think is best for them. But maybe during the same best year of their life they also had a bad experience. We don't want that, we don't want to drive them back to that incident. They already have done so much to keep their families alive, which had taken them up to me being alive and me working for you. . . . So, when we interview Elders and people who provide the money are giving this much (a reference to a token amount) . . . I never like it (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011).

Konek justifies payment in relation to the history and suffering of elders. He draws our attention to the fact that *Qablunaat* researchers do not necessarily know what historical experiences are being resurrected. What appears to be a cheery account of past events may, at the same time, be accompanied by troubling memories hidden from the researcher. Payment shows respect (van der Geest 2007). The *Qablunaat's* concern, knowing the power of money, may be commodification of information. The Inuit concern is to show respect. Finally, money paid to elders often goes to grandchildren. Ironically, money returns to elders some of the power and prestige once associated with the transfer of knowledge and skill.

Social justice and youthful awareness

The paradox of a project helping Inuit youth become more aware of their colonial history is that the sense of injustice this can generate has implications for the research project in-and-of-itself. Many youth are increasingly aware that southern Canadians have capitalised on Inuit historical experience and have derived income from films, books, magazine articles, still photography, research publications, like this one, and other means for portraying what many Canadians have come to understand as an exotic culture with an exciting, and sometimes tragic, history. If *Qablunaat* are going to base careers and financial well-being on the exploitation of Inuit stories, art, historical experience and culture, why shouldn't young Inuit cash in on some of this good fortune?

What makes [money] so important? Is it something that's going to make me feel I have no answer for that? I have an answer for that. \$50 is what we expected for the youth is because of how global we are and how so many people are getting a lot of our information. They are making all these money of our information that they've been seeking for and through their information they got off ours, they're making lots of money and they're going to use it to something else, not to our land, people. It's the chain we are learning. (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011)

Konek's question about money makes his awareness of its power obvious. He is not going to be intimidated so that he cannot answer the question about what makes money so important. His answer invokes a clear sense of social justice. If 'they' are going to make money from the information Inuit provide and not return it to the benefit of Inuit land and people, then at least Inuit youth should be well-paid for participating in activities that make money for others. The issue of 'trust' underpins this statement. Distinguishing between initiatives led by and designed to benefit Inuit and historical experience with other kinds of projects conditions his observations. Distinguishing PAR from other ways of doing things is not something to be taken for-granted.

Relationship to southerners

As noted, misconceptions regarding the actual wealth of southerners provide another source of miscommunication between Inuit youth and *Qablunaat* researchers. Although southerners travelling to the Arctic may have more wealth relative to working-class Inuit, this does not necessarily mean all *Qablunaat* have the means to participate in the exaggerated stereotype of western consumption. According to Ger and Belk (1996: 58): 'These stereotypes are provided by the Western media products that are now becoming common in the non-Western world, so that non-Westerners may want to consume according to an exaggerated image of Western consumption that Western consumers themselves seldom reflect.' These images condition the ensemble of social relations, what is said, imagined and conceived, elements that cannot be separated from what, in this case, Inuit are asked to do and accept by way of relationships to production and any reward they may receive. These exaggerations of western consumption (and hence the rewards that make consumption possible) disappoint young Inuit. For most young Inuit, and young *Qablunaat*, the capitalist dream of opportunity and socio-economic mobility is not real (Ger and Belk 1996; McQuaig and Brooks 2010). While Ger and Belk (1996) focus on the difference between western and non-western consumers, given class differences between Inuit and *Qablunaat* their observations are relevant here too.

Veblen (1899) pointed out that consumption patterns are developed socially in relation to an individual's po-

sition in the social hierarchy. He suggested that individuals use material consumption to mimic the wealth of classes above them, the message being that they too are successful and have 'made it'. High credit-card debt among the current middle class can be seen as the over-communication of true economic wealth (Trigg 2001). Social media contribute to the desirability of appearing to be someone who one is not. The possibilities of misunderstanding what life is like for *Qablunaat* working in Nunavut are considerable. Sorting out who is wealthy and who is not is no easy task when people are dislocated from their home environment. The 'blanks' that get filled in, facilitated by questionable stereotypes, may or may not reflect a researcher's reality.

Misinterpretation of the economic well-being of southerners by Inuit youth and a failure to distinguish between a research budget and an individual's personal economic situation over-extends the imagined ability of southern visitors to meet the economic needs of Inuit with whom they are working. This can lead to awkward situations where one is asked to loan or give someone funds to 'tie them over' in a period of economic hardship, something experienced by the principal investigator on a number of occasions. While in Arviat, Dutheil was asked if she was rich and often pressured to buy carvings and handicrafts and to loan money. In the south, Dutheil would be regarded as a low-income indebted university student. Studies show how southerners were similarly sought after when Inuit needed to sell country food to obtain money (Gombay 2010). When asked about why Inuit thought Dutheil was rich, Konek's response was '... Inuit are just learning to use money. They know how to use it, but not properly ... we're learning slowly but surely. It's just the miscommunications. I knew you didn't have much money, but on the other hand, I kinda thought that you did...' (Konek Facebook message to author, 27 September 2011). The struggle is to figure out where someone is located in terms of class and 'ability to pay'.

Konek discusses how geographic and class isolation give rise to misconceptions about *Qablunaat* wealth.

The reason why Inuit think white people are rich is because they come to the North, either for work or to visit, either way they obviously have enough money to fly up here, where it costs a lot to fly and to live. And if you're deciding to live here, you're well educated and have learned to control money yourself. We're just starting to learn to use money. If an organization sent you here to work, you are instantly a rich person because the organization you work for is making good money and will provide you [with] enough money (Konek Facebook message to author, 25 September 2011).

Putting aside falsely imagining the true wealth of *Qablunaat*, misconceptions about the wealth of most *Qablunaat* set young Inuit (and arguably many young westerners) on the path of pursuing an unattainable

version of material wealth. This mythology is facilitated by the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth in western society (Ger and Belk 1996; McQuaig and Brooks 2010; Yalnizyan 2010). There is always somewhere, 'up the ladder', to go.

What applies to individuals can apply to projects and institutions. Konek notes the necessity of money for a younger generation. The anxiety this creates in relation to culture change is obvious.

What I'm trying to say is that when it comes to money, we're becoming something that we're not, we used to be people that relied on mother nature, now we're relying on stores. The reason why I think youth feel that they're going to get paid is because we're a research project that comes out of the North 'wealthy project' funded by the government. Who wouldn't ask for money when it's something funded by wealthy people? That's where the misunderstanding is, we're a limited budget group and all other budgets are (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 27 September 2011).

The imagined versus true wealth of southerners can be attributed to the role of 'media-scapes' in Arctic communities. Varman and Belk (2008) argue that television, through the repetition of images, symbols and discourses, provides a way of understanding and talking about social realities. The introduction of television into Arctic communities marked a shift in the way western ideology would be administered to Inuit. Konek's discussion regarding the misunderstandings of *Qablunaat* affluence among Inuit can be attributed to television and increasingly, 'internet-scapes' and the internalisation of western ideologies. Included in this messaging are expectations about consumption; an accumulative function that knows no end unless one is well-versed in the realities of personal finances, future prospects and credit. Konek sums it up by reference to one of his elders. 'One of the Elders here said "don't bury Inuit culture alive. . . . some Inuit try not to act like they're too Inuk, they don't even notice what they're doing is being done all over the world"' (Konek Facebook message to Dutheil, 29 August 2011).

Conclusion

Conducting research involves relationships that are about money. The rapid growth of research conducted in Inuit homelands makes the need for Inuit-led and Inuit participation obvious. With income inequalities growing in Canada and aboriginal people and aboriginal youth disproportionately affected by this trend, their relationship to research and research opportunities is likely to become increasingly complex.

Experiences with the Nanisiniq project reveal just how complex these understandings can be. Inuit culture remains a hunting culture with the cultural norms and expectations of the extended family (*ilagiit*) intact. For a younger generation, money plays an increasingly im-

portant role in their capacity to participate in a culture and economy that intersects with these norms and expectations, but that is increasingly focused on post-modern forms of production, communication and consumption. Money is both real (has purchasing power) and symbolic. While its purchasing power establishes and, in the case of southern researchers, is seen to demark class differences, its symbolic value borrows from relations contained within Inuit culture, respect for elders. For young people who may not participate in land-based harvesting and other activities, it is another means of fulfilling their family obligations. Class and culture in these relations clearly intersect. The only anecdote to the misunderstandings that might otherwise arise is, as demonstrated by Dutheil and Konek, open and informed communication.

As much as, or perhaps even more, than knowing how to work and communicate cross-culturally, researchers and Inuit need to learn more about how to negotiate economic relationships in relation to class differences. For both Inuit and *Qablunaat* youth, understanding the machinations of contemporary capitalist modes of production, consumption and representation, and how these intersect with the cultural norms and practices of Inuit culture, are necessary to this knowing.

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