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Women, Health, and Aging in Yup'ik/Cup'ik Culture

Abstract: Knowledge of culture beliefs about health and how they influence life choices and intervention is essential in forming health policy and health promotion programs to meet the growing needs of aging minority population. This thesis explores cultural beliefs, experiences, and expectations of health and well-being of Yup'ik/Cup'ik women in two rural communities in southwestern Alaska. Interviews were conducted with fifteen women to address two key research questions: 1) how Yup'ik/Cup'ik women define health and well-being; and 2) what environmental, social, and cultural factors contribute to healthy Yup'ik/Cup'ik aging. While many health beliefs and practices appear very different from those current in research on aging, many commonalities and similarities emerge-concern for family, importance of physical activity and healthy diet, and need for social support. A significant finding of this study is that traditional Yup'ik/Cup'ik ways of living parallels that of current research findings on healthy aging in mainstream populations.