

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AND HUMAN KINDS: THE EVOLUTION OF INUIT CHILDBIRTH INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

V. Douglas

University of Alberta

Objectives: To construct a theoretical framework within which the historical evolution of Inuit childbirth practices may be situated.

Study Design: This study applies narrative analysis to a historical study.

Methods: Semi-structured oral interviews conducted with participants in the Arctic communities of Puvurnituq, Inukjuaq, and Rankin Inlet were analysed and compared with historical literature on Inuit childbirth practices in order to create a historical narrative of Inuit childbirth practices.

Results: Inuit childbirth is not characterised by specific practices, beliefs or rituals. These have all undergone a process of historical evolution. However, applying Hacking's concepts of human kinds and historical ontology to Inuit childbirth constructs its identity without fixing it to specific practices at any particular place in time or space.

Conclusions: Inuit childbirth retains a historical continuity and cultural integrity that is expressed through Inuit culture itself, and must be understood as reflective of it.

Contact: Vasiliki Douglas (vasiliki@ualberta.ca)