

Suicide: Re-Examining Cause Among Alaskan Adolescents

Joan L. Hurlbut Ed. D.



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The purpose of this study was to perform an archival search for the factor(s) of the Alaskan adolescent (15-24-year olds) suicide epidemic. The State of Alaska's adolescent suicide statistics as extrapolated from the Alaskan census and population data and the data from a related control group, the adolescents of the 13th Regional Corporation based in Seattle, Washington, for the years 1980-1997 were used, thereby providing a study population of approximately 80,000 adolescents. The population consisted of approximately 16,000 Alaskan natives, 55,000 whites, and 8,000 others, which were predominantly Black or Oriental. Suicide, according to the literature, is a multidimensional malaise that is viewed as an indicator of societal health. The use and acceptance of suicide has evolved over the centuries as society's value of an individual's life has changed. As profound change alters cultures, the use of suicide as a coping strategy increased. In Alaska, the adolescent suicide crude rate was almost nil until the time of statehood, where upon it began escalating geometrically. This study was reminiscent of Durkheim's sociological study of suicide in which he worked with society as a whole attempting to determine the productive factors of the social phenomenon of suicide. Inferential statistics (ANOVA, and T-tests) were used to perform cross-sectional analyses by race, gender, and geographic location; all were found to be statistically significant potential indicators of suicide.

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