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It's Good to Know Who Your Relatives Are but We Were Taught to Share with Everybody: Shares and Sharing among Inupiaq Households

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One afternoon, about ten years ago, I listened to Raymond Neakok, Sr., a Barrow whaler, explain to a niece what *tutqiksi*—generally translated as contentment—meant to him. It expresses a ‘sense of satisfaction’ and ‘peace of mind’, he said, which is created and nurtured by hunting and providing others with food through sharing; it communicates a feeling of freedom, joy, and pride in being successful in this way; and it may be renewed when, even years later, someone comes up to you and says, ‘thanks, remember when ...’ It lasts only a few moments before you must go back out and do it all over again. The feeling must be constantly renewed—through hunting and through sharing—in order to be maintained.

Now, Inupiaq houses do not look a lot like Hadzadabe camps. They are likely to be framed with aluminium siding and to be furnished with a micro-wave oven, cable television and an IBM workstation. It would not be surprising to find the number for the local pizza place or the Chinese restaurant which serves Mongolian Beef by the telephone. My friends Raymond and Marie Neakok live in such a house. They are both employed full-time; their children, now adults, are bringing up children of their own near by. It looks in many ways like simply another suburban North American household. And yet, not only they, but many people, living in many similar households across the North Slope of Alaska have referred repeatedly to the emotional satisfaction they experience through sharing—although rarely with the eloquence with which Raymond was teaching his niece—sharing which is very different in its intensity from the social interactions which underpin mainstream suburban communities. Part of my initial research between 1984 and 1986 was prompted as a response to these assertions of how important sharing was and I tried to learn what it meant, not only in its rhetoric, but in its practice.¹⁾ The result was to trace what I call the ‘sharing-networks’ of the two households with which I was most intimately connected over the course of about twenty months, to follow a few other households more sporadically and to supplement that long-range information with a series of structured interviews with members of randomly selected households in Barrow and Wainwright, Alaska. In total, I gathered sporadic sharing information for seventy-eight households, more systematic information from twenty-eight households and quite intensive information from

two households.

I want to do two things with that information in this chapter. I want first to examine what seem to me to be quite important differences between the category of 'a share' (*ningik*) and the actions implied by 'sharing' among the Inupiat of northern Alaska.²⁾ In brief, I shall argue that shares are not about reciprocity, whereas sharing most certainly is. Secondly, the moral nature of this sharing invites us to consider the implications of this material for economic anthropology as a whole. As a range of complex processes, sharing, I suggest, cannot easily be held apart from 'gift' and/or 'commodity' in any consideration of the nature of property. Thus, it should be of interest not only to those of us who want to understand social relations in hunting and gathering societies but also to any anthropologist interested in the social nature of circulated resources in general.

The complexity of property relations among hunters has been the subject of discussion for more than a decade (see in particular Ingold, Riches and Woodburn [1988], vol. 2; Wilmsen [1988]). Ingold [1983: 562] for hunter-gatherers in general, Burch [1988] for the Arctic, Hayden [1994] with reference to competition and most recently Woodburn for what he terms 'Immediate Return' societies [1998] all argue that hunter/gatherer exchange relations are much wider in scope than is recognised in Sahlins' [1972] generalised reciprocity model which has been so frequently applied to them. In fact, Woodburn's strong argument is that sharing is not about reciprocity at all on the grounds that 'donation is obligatory and is disconnected from the right to receive' [1998: 50]. On the North Slope of Alaska, 'shares' involve a single transaction in which the division of meat satisfies a claim that earned through contribution to the hunting effort. Echoing Woodburn, access to these shares is dependent neither on negotiation with nor on generosity from the giver. As we shall see, however, unlike the unconditional and universal access to meat described by Woodburn, Inupiat are quite explicit that 'shares' (with one important exception) are something someone has a right to because he or she has already fulfilled a responsibility. These shares, although non-negotiable, are absolutely a right to a return in exchange for the contribution made.³⁾

What Woodburn calls 'sharing' I would call 'a share'—and do so because Inupiat themselves make that linguistic distinction. 'Sharing' does not denote a thing of value, but rather a complex of social actions all of which create and maintain morally valued relationships that extend well beyond hunting itself. As Neakok said above, it brings with it a sense of well-being and as we shall see it is crucially about reciprocity. I am quite aware how much this language resonates with the Maussian language of gift. Sharing, however, is not gifting; how and why this is not so bears some consideration.

This brings me back to my second focus, namely to think about some of the implications this material might have for economic anthropology as a whole. The fact that sharing is a complex rather than uniform process is even more significant when we think about the extent to which it must be thought in conjunction with, rather than as separated off from, gifting and commoditizing. That this should be

so in late 20th century Barrow, funded by property taxes paid by oil companies, is perhaps not surprising; Burch's [1988] late 19th century material suggests strongly that this is not simply a function of 'contact' which should therefore be dismissed as transitional. Sharing, gifting and commoditizing all played important roles in the social lives of 19th century Inupiat, just as they do, albeit in different ways, today. Inupiat clearly neither can nor should be made to stand for all hunter gatherers. Indeed, the material in this volume quite clearly shows how differently the ideologies as well as the social organisation of sharing are constructed among hunter gatherers across the globe. Still, this material suggests that models of economic organisation among hunter-gatherers should not be restricted to sharing. By the same token, sharing among non-hunter-gatherers needs also to be recognised analytically as well as descriptively.⁴⁾ The ways in which it can and perhaps should be thought across categories is of central interest to this chapter.

For the rest of the chapter, I refer to 'shares' as something one can earn as an individual within Inupiaq social organisation. Sharing both maintains social networks among humans and fulfils the social contract between humans and animals. I begin with a general consideration of how people gain access to shares and subsequently use case example material to examine in detail the ways in which shares and sharing-networks operate differently in the provisioning of households. Finally, this quite specific material is placed in the context of more general information gleaned from other, wider sources. Although the bulk of the detailed documentation was gathered during the mid-1980s, conversations held during subsequent visits to Barrow between 1994–1998 suggest that the argument I am drawing from the material remains valid.

RESOURCES IN COMMON: ACCESS TO THE BASICS

Barrow Inupiat live well within the Arctic Circle on the edge of the Beaufort sea. There they are in the path of migratory marine mammals and also have easy river access to the resources of the interior. Although all of these resources are important, whales and whaling have long been central in the organisation of social life. Today, the village itself has a population of around 3,500, about 60% of whom are Inupiat. Although access to cash is necessary for the provisioning of a household, hunting remains crucial. Of the 78 Barrow households in my overall sample, 58 participated directly in whaling activities as members of one or more boat crews; 42 included at least one member who hunted regularly, and 20 included a member who hunted occasionally. All of the households participated in the circulation of Inupiaq food to some extent, including the 16 households with no hunting members, primarily elders living alone and single mothers.⁵⁾ 'Inupiaq food is social food' I was told in 1997 and that seems to remain unquestionably true.

The basic resources for hunting: land, animals and knowledge—are all defined as common property by Inupiat (not, of course, by the State of Alaska or the Federal Government of the United States). 'Since time immemorial, it's been this

way,' related Ernest Kignak, 'when people travel up there on the land, it doesn't matter if they're from Barrow or from any other place. If they get up there, they can go hunting. This also applies to the oceans (in Bodenhorn [1988a: 57]). This was based in large part on the idea that the resource was plentiful. When asked about current struggles over land title, a number of elders were incredulous: 'This is a big land; there should be enough for everybody.' 'There's lots of open places up inland right now ... land claims is open-free for all.' (G. Mongoyak in Bodenhorn [1988a: 81])

Many Inupiat perceive the animals' intent to be a deciding factor in a hunter's success: 'the animals, following their purpose for living from time past, allow themselves to be killed ...' [ATTUNGANA 1986: 16]. They give themselves up to those who are deserving, ie, respectful and generous, and avoid those who are not. Rules governing interpersonal behaviour, like those concerning the land, are predicated on the idea that there are enough animals and ensure rather than restrict access to them. Over the past century, legal restrictions have been imposed on the hunt of virtually all of the animals customarily taken by Inupiat. Germane to this discussion is the fact that these laws have removed 'traditional' Inupiat prey from the market place. Some of the implications of ways in which restrictions on selling hunted meat may have affected sharing practices are addressed in the discussion.

One of the greatest changes in the availability of food resources is the establishment of well-stocked stores, the importance of which was often emphasised: 'We were glad to see the stores come; it means we won't starve if the animals don't come.' [BODENHORN 1988b: 235] Most of the people interviewed considered the store as an essential, but supplemental, source of food.

The injunction to share extends explicitly to knowledge. 'You have to tell what you know, that's one of the rules.' The fact that information is available to all does not, of course, mean that everyone is equally knowledgeable, but it does mean that hunters—unlike commercial fishermen—are constantly sharing information.

EARNING SHARES

If, as Ernest Kignak said, anyone who can 'get up there' can go hunting, hunters often need help to take this first step. Although the resource base is defined as common property, it nevertheless demands access to resources that are not so defined: tools, weapons, transportation and so forth. Most hunters in my experience rely on a number of sources of support to equip themselves to go 'look around' for animals. In 1986, Raymond Neakok, Sr. could not afford to buy all the material goods needed to hunt. Even with the 'basics' in hand (transportation, camping equipment and guns), an extended weekend geese-hunting trip that spring cost more than \$600 for fuel, food, ammunition, snow-machine parts and the like. Gaining access to these material necessities placed him in a set of relationships with many people, all of whom earned shares in a successful catch. In general, the strategies he used were followed by many in the community: he gained access to

cash he had not earned himself, but more often, he gained access to equipment and supplies he did not buy himself.

If one cannot buy equipment, it may be gifted, loaned, or shared. Rifles are often given to a hunter by close family members: from parent to child, or wife to husband (see also Worl & Smythe [1986]). Sometimes, however, they may be further afield. Several years ago, I was given a box of seal meat to deliver to an aunt (related 'through-the-generations-somehow') in Fairbanks. She had given Neakok a rifle appropriate for hunting seal, it was explained to me, and in return he would send her occasional shares of meat. Other necessities were also given to him: a sled built by his father; *tuttuulik* (boots made out of caribou) made by his mother-in-law; jackets sewn by his wife. Boat engines, boats, camping equipment, and so forth may be loaned between households, usually to family members. In Raymond Neakok's case both siblings (natal and adoptive) and siblings-in-law were regularly called upon to provide transportation (to pull the boat to the launching site, for instance); a brother loaned him a boat engine for a season; an affinal cousin provided a motorboat when Raymond and Marie went to visit the latter's family in Nuiqsut during the summer. Equipment is also shared while it is being used, becoming an important element in the choice of hunting partner.⁶ Raymond generally goes out hunting with one or two partners. Over the course of 1986, this included nineteen people. About half of these were 'close family' (ie, the relationship was easily and clearly traced), several were 'related somehow' and the rest were not identified as kin. His choice of partner depended (and continues to depend) on what he was hunting and where (ie, on their skills and/or knowledge of a particular territory or ecological zone), whether or not they had transportation he needed (or vice versa), whether or not they were both free for the day, felt like going out, and would enjoy each other's company. His wife provided the greatest and most regular financial support. One of her siblings, who stayed with them occasionally, contributed to household costs, thus leaving Marie with more 'disposable' income; his father occasionally bought enough fuel for a trip.

Inupiaq man-the-hunter, then, is already something of a consortium before he sets out. Indeed, the person doing the killing is often not defined as the (sole) hunter. This is perhaps most explicitly set out in terms of the dependence a husband is often said to have on his wife. It is her responsibility to attract the animals, which give themselves to her husband—leading Elijah Kakinya to say to Leona Okakok some years ago, 'I'm not the great hunter, my wife is' (see Bodenhorn [1990; 1993]).

It should then not be surprising to learn that, although the animal has given itself to the hunter, the hunter does not 'own' the carcass. As among many hunters, he may not dispose of the catch according to whim, but must follow set rules.⁷ If the hunt is successful, the catch is distributed in different ways, depending on the species. *Avik*-means 'to divide in halves', for instance; *autaaq*-signifies 'to divide equally into shares'; *ningik*, the noun, signifies the share itself.⁸ Fish, if caught on a hook, are individual property; if caught with a net,

they are shared by those who helped set, check, and clear the net. Water fowl belong to the person who caught them, although someone who helps to retrieve them gets a 'share'. Caribou are butchered where it was caught—by women if they are along—and shared equally among those present. Each person gets an equal share, regardless of whether or not one partner is a senior relative, or by far the best shot and regardless of the initial 'investment'—food, fuel, sled—or the number of children to be fed. The person who actually killed the animal retains the hide, which was customarily a source of trade wealth [BURCH 1988: 101] and today may still be turned into *tuttuulik* for use, for gift, or for sale. Seals, bearded seals and walrus are divided into 'shares' and then distributed asymmetrically with the boat owner receiving an extra share; again the successful hunter keeps the skin and the ivory, both of which continue to be valuable resources today. Beluga are hunted in groups and shared communally; polar bear are generally killed by individuals who keep the hide, but share the meat communally.

'Shares' are thus earned on the basis of collective membership in the hunting consortium, so to speak—defined by contributing towards the means of production or by participating in the hunting effort itself. I am by no means suggesting an absence of an individualised self here—either in terms of affect or effective result. Neakok's account with which this chapter opened indicates a highly developed and strongly internalised sense of pride and satisfaction in his own actions. And although these rules may well distribute food evenly, the person responsible for the actual harvest is the one who claims the part of the animal that potentially produces the most durable wealth: hides, ivory and so forth. In all cases, however, this initial division is enacted within clearly-defined relationships which may potentially be 'closed out' with one transaction. One man goes hunting with another; they take their share of the day's catch and that is that. Individual shares are then subdivided into further shares—for the sister who gifted a rifle, for instance, or the cousin who made the loan of an engine.

Butchering introduces an additional set of relationships. To butcher, or *pilak-*, is 'to work'. It is talked of as 'hard work' in fact and anyone who helps earns 'a share'. Caribou and walrus are generally cut up on the spot, the latter by men on the ice. Other animals are more often brought back to camp or the village and processed by women. A single animal is usually butchered by the hunter's wife (sister or mother if he is unmarried), although a large one is frequently butchered by two or three related women. In the 1980s, when Raymond brought home an ugruk (bearded seal), he often dropped it in front of his mother's house; Marie would go to help *pilak-*, sometimes accompanied by her daughter, niece, sister-in-law or myself (as a 'kid-of-some-sort'). Ten years later, Raymond's mother has passed away, the animals are deposited in front of the conjugal home and it is Marie's daughters, daughter-in-law and occasional friend who come to her to help out.

If a group has successfully brought back several animals, 'pilaking' may become more complex. In one case, four young men returned from a day's hunting with several bearded seals and a number of smaller *natchiich* (ringed seals). The

boat-owner and his son were both single, which left D., their daughter/sister, in charge of organising the help needed to *pilak*- the animals. Ultimately, close to a dozen women were involved: sisters, wives and girl-friends of the hunters; Marie, because Raymond, a relative, had been working full-time that summer and had no chance to 'go boating'; and a number of single women who 'were not attached to hunters'. The men brought the seals from the beach, set up a wind-break in preparation and retired to the house while we worked outside, emerging occasionally to sharpen an *ulu* (women's knife); women would warm up inside with a cup of tea and a chat. By midnight, the sun still low on the horizon, we all (men and women) clustered around the kitchen table, drinking tea, eating hardtack and *qiaq*, a delicacy made of the external lining of the *ugruk* intestine, laughing and telling stories. Upon departure, each woman was given a share: either a chunk of *ugruk* or an entire small seal (none of which had been butchered that evening). We went home tired, full, relaxed, and carrying ten to twenty pounds of meat. D. explicitly considered several factors as she assembled her work force. The hunters were entitled to a share of their catch; the women immediately connected to them automatically had the responsibility to offer their help, and the right to earn their share. D. felt it was her responsibility to make sure that women were included who had no husbands to provide them regularly with meat. It was a woman's labour, not her connection to a man, that entitled her to part of the catch. Like the immediate division that occurs among hunters, this interaction generates no further obligation; at the end of the evening, no one is beholden to anyone else. It therefore easily incorporates non-close-kin.⁹

Bowhead whaling is accompanied by more complex organisation than any other hunting activity. Whalers form crews that endure over time and include the specialised positions of harpooner, captain, or boat-owner (*umialik*), and his wife.¹⁰ Although a single crew might kill a whale by itself, several crews spread along the ice increase the chances of a successful hunt. Once a whale is struck, other crews help tow it close to the village and many people are recruited to pull it onto the ice, butcher it and take it to shore before the ice breaks or the meat spoils. Redistribution rules are formalised and effectively ensure a flow of whale meat throughout the community over the course of the year.¹¹

Whales, like all the other animals, offer themselves up to be killed. 'It's hard to explain what it's like when the whale gives itself up to you unless you see it,' affirmed Harry Brower, Sr. [1981: 3]. 'The whale is given to you out of nowhere... When this happens, no matter what you do, it's yours ... You could shout at it, try to chase it away, but it will stay there.'

This is a gift, again as with all animals, that is contingent upon proper human behaviour. If the conditions are not correct, a whale that has been struck may be escorted away by two healthy ones: 'if the whales know something about a person—like if he's greedy—they'll take [the struck whale] away.'. The cultural construction of the whale/human relationship emphasises social relations at the community level more than individual acts of generosity. Patrick Attungana, a

whaling captain from Point Hope, eloquently relates:

“When the whales travel, they know about St. Lawrence[Island], so when they reach there, one of them stop, like they are camping, allowing themselves to be killed ... As they keep on travelling, when they reach Barrow, one of them camp, caught by the whalers ... When the whale is caught, ... the whole whale gives itself to all the people ... the whale being or spirit never dies. [When the surviving whales begin migrating south again], the dead whale’s being or spirit return to the live whales. The returning whales begin to listen to the whale that had been like camping. He tells them that his hosts were good, the married couple were good to it ... The whale that had good hosts starts wishing and telling others that it will camp again the following year. The other whale who did not have good hosts says that it will not camp again ... When you hunt in harmony, you don’t have problems catching the animals. This is what needs to be thought about. If the hunters from Barter to St. Lawrence Island hunt in harmony, the animals will keep going. They will acquire, they will catch the animal” [ATTUNGANA 1986: 16ff].

The whale ‘gives itself to all the people’; it does this when it ‘sees’ a vision of a woman at her hearth and then offers itself up to her husband on the ice. In order for it to want to return the following year, the ‘good hosts’ must not only be generous, but they must ‘hunt in harmony’. An attractive camping place is one where people are at peace with each other; the whales reciprocate by leaving their ‘parkas’—their meat and their *maktak*—as food for everyone.¹²⁾ With no other animal, was the definition of proper behaviour so clearly oriented towards community.¹³⁾ As with all of the other animals, proper social relations between whales and humans depend on two other forms of sociality: that among humans-who-share-food and that among whales-who-share-information.

Although access to the whale is presented as a function of collectively responsible behaviour, entitlement to shares is dependent on crew membership. As with hunting partnerships, membership in these crews is largely a matter of choice and is extremely fluid. Sons of whaling captains generally whale with their father’s crew, but they are not constrained to do so. A young man may whale with various crews over the course of several years to learn hunting skills from different people.¹⁴⁾ Skilled whalers may be actively recruited by a whaling captain; conversely, a whaler may solicit a captain for permission to join his crew. In some families, three sons may each whale with a different crew and a daughter may help out with a fourth. This is an explicit strategy to maximise a household’s access to shares in the whale meat when it is perceived to be in short supply. Today, this is a response to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) quotas. A few people simultaneously whale with two crews, also in response to IWC restrictions.

The right to strike a whale is explicit. The first crew actually to make contact with the whale is entitled to the largest share of the meat (hence the above strategy of spreading a household labour pool over several crews). Rules have developed which ensure the accurate identification of the ‘first-strike crew’ as well as equalised

chances to enjoy that position. The harpoon heads of each crew are marked with the captain's property mark. As the whaling camps are located along the ice, and as the whales migrate from west to east in the spring, the property mark of the crew camped furthest west is determined to be that of the 'first-strike' crew (see also Worl [1980]).¹⁵ If a crew strikes at a whale but misses, it is supposed to let some whales go by before trying again in order to give 'first crack' to the crews further east. A crew that has successfully landed and butchered a whale is expected to relocate. 'Sometimes the whales like to pass through a certain area and this would give another crew a chance to catch a whale' [LEAVITT 1981: 4].

Once killed, a spring whale must be towed to a spot on the ice where it can be brought out of the water and butchered. Nearby crews assist with the towing. Men are not meant to shout their glee or celebrate yet in any overt way, lest the whale slip under the ice. When the captain is reasonably sure that the whale will be landed, word is sent back to Barrow. The mood in the village suddenly sparkles with energy and CBs crackle with excitement as people prepare to make their way to help pull the whale out onto the ice. Large whales (40–60 feet long) produce approximately one ton of potential food per foot in length. The most sought after whales in Barrow vary from about twenty to thirty feet long because the meat and the maktak is tender but even these 'small' whales (15–30 feet) demand considerable labour power in the processes of butchering the animal, transporting and storing the meat, preparing the feast that is offered to the entire community and cleaning up the butchering site. The eight whales successfully landed by Barrow crews in 1988 introduced some 400,000 pounds of meat and maktak into the region.

The butchering itself is highly organised. One man stands on top of the whale and determines where each cut should be made; the *umialik* watches, but does not take part. Someone else then directs the cutters where to take each piece of meat or maktak. Once the whale has been butchered and the meat evenly divided into crew shares, attendance is called. As long as a representative of a crew is present, that crew is included in the division of the whale.¹⁶

Two prescribed levels of share allocation (one between crews and one within crews) and a generalised communal distribution must follow a set pattern. All parts of the whale: the meat and *maktak* from specific parts of the body, the flippers, the baleen, heart, intestines, tongue, kidney and tail are all categorised in terms of who receives how much. Among crews, half of the *tavsi*, the middle 'belt' of *maktak*, goes to the successful crew and the captain; half is cooked and served to the public. The crew which actually kills the whale receives extra *maktak* [WORL 1980: 317]. The next largest share goes to the first crew to assist the original crew in landing the whale. If further help was needed towing it to the ice, the third and fourth crews to help may also be entitled to specific shares, particularly of baleen.¹⁷ Within crews, the captain, the harpooner, and the owner of the harpoon (which might be a woman) all get specific shares. For the captain, this includes a portion that is physically set aside for communal feasts as described below. All other shares within the crew are equal. Those who took part from the beginning of

the whaling season to the end receive the same size share as those who may have participated for a day or two. The captain is then responsible for using part of his share to distribute further shares to any people who may have supported the crew indirectly. Many employed men and women contribute money for gas, or send out food and coffee, thus entitling themselves to a share. This may well include people from other villages. During the year, captains are expected to provide for those who are without through sharing. To ensure a successful whaling season, an *umialik* must have redistributed all of his previous year's share before setting out for the ice in the spring.

Distribution not defined by crew membership may take a variety of forms, two of which ensure shares to people unattached to hunters. The first occurs when the crews have finished butchering. The captain lets out a shout and all the women present (who may or may not be attached to a crew) begin *pilaniaq-*, to hack off any further meat they can reach. This is the exact opposite of the systematic, ordered and cooperative effort of the (male) crews' butchering. The atmosphere is akin to the opening minutes of Harrods' Christmas Sale. One's extremities are at risk; *ulus* flash whilst women move with good humoured, but ferocious intensity towards a bit of attractive meat. I have seen women leave with ten or fifteen pounds of meat obtained in this way (and have received my own 'small share' for timorously holding a plastic bag for a friend while she waded into the fray instead of having a go myself). The second enabled elders rather than women to earn shares. When the whalers began to bring sleds of meat back to the village, 'old people, the ones who don't have any providers' would go down to the trails, offer the whalers a cup of hot tea and receive a small share in return. This was known as *urgalaq-* and is - to my knowledge - no longer practiced.¹⁸⁾

On the North Slope, the most important responsibilities of the whaling captain and his wife involve not only the distribution of shares, but also the offering of communal hospitality at several points during the year. The first is immediately. As the whale is being butchered, women connected to the crew prepare pots of fresh, boiled *maktak* (*uunaaliit*, literally 'hot things') and serve them with hot coffee to people helping on the ice. Simultaneously sled loads of meat are taken to town so that other women can start preparing a meal at the captain's house, boiling huge portions of every part of the whale: meat, *maktak*, heart, lungs, tongue, kidney, etc. When it is ready, the crew's flag goes up over the house and the entire community is invited in for a meal. The serving of prepared food also marks the end of the whaling season—at a mini-feast called *Apugauti*. When the *umiaq* (skin-covered whaling boat) is brought to shore for the last time, the crew once again serves Inupiaq food on the beach to all comers.¹⁹⁾ The provision of hospitality is not about the distribution of 'shares' to people who have a right to claim them, but about sharing the catch literally as 'good hosts.'

Approximately the back third of the whale (the *uati*); the tail flippers (*aqikkaak*) and the organs (heart, intestine, kidney and half of the tongue) are designated as the community share and are distributed during three community

feasts: Nalukataq, Thanksgiving, and Christmas [AHMAOGAK personal communication; in preparation]. Here everyone receives shares, regardless of their participation in the whaling itself. Nalukataq is celebrated approximately six weeks after the whaling season ends and is hosted by successful crews at a traditional site on the beach. If more than one crew has caught a whale during a season, they may hold separate feasts, or they may join forces. The captain, his wife, and the crew spend weeks making arrangements for the feast. *Mikigaq* (whalemeat and *maktak* fermented in whale blood) must be prepared; ducks and geese hunted for soup. Hundreds of people will be fed. On the day, villagers and visitors assemble slowly, sitting with family in a large semi-circle inside the wind-break set up that morning. Crew members (male/female pairs) serve prepared food, which is eaten on the spot, and distribute shares of whale meat, *maktak*, and *quaq* (frozen meat, often caribou or fish). If meat is plentiful, shares are dispersed per household member;²⁰ if it is scarce, each household receives the same amount. At the end, the captain shouts *iglaat!* (visitors) and people from other communities are invited forward to help themselves to the portion of the tail that is reserved for them, much as the women were invited to help themselves at the end of the butchering.

Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts are not hosted in quite the same way by individual crews, but are community efforts which take place in the context of a church service. Whale meat, *maktak*, and *quaq* are contributed by all of the whaling captains who have received shares during the year, while the community as a whole furnishes the prepared food: soup, tea, cakes and so forth. The distribution of shares is conducted by people chosen by the church deacons; the rules for distribution to each household, however, remain the same as at Nalukataq.

In sum, customary rules encourage maximum distribution of the whale over the course of a year; several pathways ensure access to shares in the whale, from the flexibility of crew membership, to the multiple rules for distribution which recognise any kind of contribution of labour as earning one a share—even that of offering a cup of hot tea to a crew member bringing sled loads of meat back to town. At the feasts, all comers have a right to take shares away; the shares are distributed from a common resource that literally includes anyone who is present. But unlike the distribution of other animals categorised as common property such as polar bear or beluga, the distribution of the whale is not complete without commensality, that is without transforming at least some of the shares into shared substance.

The 'right' to a share then comes from two sources. As an entitlement resulting from meeting the responsibilities of contributing to the hunting effort: labour, tools, knowledge and so forth, it is non-negotiable but is in no way a 'free good'. And indeed, during a recent discussion of how to translate the concept of 'rights' from English into Inupiaq, I asked if the 'right' to a share and the 'right' to remain silent were analogous in their non-negotiability. I was corrected

immediately, on the grounds that the former was connected to responsibility.²¹⁾ The right to a share in the whale at Nalukataq, however, carries no such restriction with it. In fact, during one feast, my niece who was visiting me for a few days, tried to refuse her share, saying she was in Barrow for too short a time to ‘count’. She was firmly given a share. This share is indeed an entitlement, but not an earned one. The whole whale has given itself and at least at ritual feasts, the whole community—in the broadest possible sense—has the unequivocal right to a share in it. The fact that whale meat has never entered the market place whereas other hunted food did so, attests to the social ethos that surrounds its symbolic value as a communal resource.

In both ideology and practice, then, generalised access to the animals is accompanied by generalised distribution. The captain and his wife act as a conduit for the whale which has given itself ‘to all the people’. Their role encompasses both ‘shares’ and ‘sharing’, underscoring the relationship between whales and community. They alone are enjoined to give away all of their stores of whale meat during the course of a season. They distribute ‘shares’ to all present in the communal setting of Nalukataq. They also provide prepared food at specific points in the whaling cycle and at different locations: on the ice (site of whaling camps, in animal territory), on the shore (the communal space that marks the border between the ‘animals of the sea and the animals of the land’, and marks the group itself—*tagiugmiut*, people of the shore), and in the couple’s home (firmly in the community, site of the captain’s wife’s hearth). It is significant that this is done through the medium of prepared food. Frozen meat is somewhat ambiguous; it can be a ‘share’, or, as a meal, it may represent hospitality. Prepared food never enters the category of ‘share’ and by offering it commensally, the whaling captain and his wife share their hospitality, acting as ‘good hosts’ to both their whale and their human guests. Again, generalised distribution enables generalised reciprocity for if shared properly, the whale’s soul will return with a ‘new parka’ which can again be taken off to feed the community. To eat Inupiaq food is to partake—in all senses—in the entire process.

PROVISIONING A HOUSEHOLD THROUGH SHARES AND SHARING

In 1986, Raymond and Marie Neakok were a ‘mature’ couple with three children, all in their early twenties. Marie, in her mid-forties, worked full-time as a Deputy Director for the North Slope Borough Health Department. Her salary was used to pay monthly expenses: *taniktaq* (‘white’) food from the store, ammunition and other hunting equipment, heat, water, electricity, clothing and so forth. She sewed jackets for her family, helped to butcher and prepare meat for storage, and went ‘camping’ with Raymond when she was able to. Approaching fifty, Raymond was a member of two whaling crews and hunted twelve months of the year, in part because he had been unemployed for some time. Today a senior citizen and working full time, Raymond continues to be respected in the community as an

excellent hunter and whaler as well as one who is knowledgeable about United States as well as Inupiaq law ways. Articulate and literate in both Inupiaq and English, both have long and varied working histories. None of the hunted food which enters the Neakok household gets sold. Inupiaq food is on their table approximately 90% of the time.²²⁾

The fact that Raymond is an active hunter involved in the networks generated by hunting partnerships as well as whaling crew membership means that the household has access to regular shares of meat. What happens when a 'share' has been brought home is a matter of individual decision and generally involves ongoing, reciprocal relations. People are expected 'to share', but decide for themselves how much they are going to give, to whom and in what context. In contrast to many hunting societies (see Woodburn [1980] for the Hadza), this does not entail total disbursement. Meat may travel directly to other households. Often these are situated in different ecological areas, allowing people to broaden their diets. A shipment of seal meat is sent out to Marie's family in Nuiqsut, a village several miles inland; at some point, a box of *kaaktak* (a highly prized whitefish caught near Nuiqsut) or caribou will find its way back to Barrow. Because Raymond was unable to catch caribou during the winter of 1983, affinal relatives in Anaktuvuk Pass and Nuiqsut kept them supplied. During 1985/6, *niquipiaq*, 'real' or hunted food, flowed between the Neakok household and eight other communities: Nuiqsut, Anaktuvuk Pass, Ouzinkie (Kodiak), Fairbanks, Anchorage, Atqasuk, Point Lay and Kaktovik (see Table 1). These complementary networks frequently include reciprocal access to territory or space. Raymond and Marie often visit her family in Nuiqsut and spend the summer fishing; a cousin from Anaktuvuk Pass (the inland village) visited them during the spring of 1987 in Barrow to learn something about coastal hunting and to take part in whaling. People often talked to Arundale (personal communication) about how 'good' it was to have affinal relatives in other communities for precisely this reason.

Once meat has entered the household, it must be preserved or prepared. This food then enters networks marked by commensality and was never referred to me as a 'share'. Prepared food circulates as a function of hospitality; this invariably includes meals and often includes food for guests to take home. *Payuk*-specifically refers to food that is brought to be shared with others. It is also contributed toward the communal feasts described in the section above.

In the 1980s, exchanges with Raymond's parents were slightly different from the above which mirror those occurring for the most part between households with active hunters. Raw meat was regularly sent to them. Since they no longer hunted, they provided prepared food, generally in the form of hospitality, but also in the form of food that might be taken on a camping trip. Raymond, Marie and the children frequently went there to eat, never in my experience the reverse. In addition, the elder Neakoks regularly contributed to the means of hunting, providing equipment, supplies, help with butchering or preparing skins and the like. Whereas exchanges often occur between individuals (between Raymond and

Table 1. Movement of food in and out of Neakok household between communities²³⁾

Communities	Shared Resource	Frequency
From Anaktuvuk Pass	caribou	frequently
To Anaktuvuk Pass	seal oil	regularly
From Nuiqsut	fish, caribou	frequently
To Nuiqsut	seal oil, seal meat	frequently
To Anchorage	fish, meat, oil	frequently
From Ouzinkie	fish, eggs, ducks	regularly
To Ouzinkie	oil, meat	regularly
To Fairbanks	seal meat	occasionally
From Kaktovik	whale	infrequently
To Atqasuk	whale, seal meat	infrequently
To Point Lay	whale meat	infrequently

his brother-in-law, for example), these are inter-household exchanges. Anyone from a particular household can expect hospitality and access to territorial resources, for instance, and shipments of food are talked about collectively: 'we just got some fish from my parents', or 'we just sent some meat to Nuiqsut'. Only in the case of elders, who may receive 'tidbits' thought tasty to older people, does food enter the household designated for specific individuals.

Both Raymond and Marie are thus involved in several sets of relations. Some of these, such as hunting partnerships, do not entail responsibilities beyond the immediate division of the catch. Some of them entail the obligations of crew membership in a clear-cut, time-defined way, and others are on-going relationships which are reinforced and renewed in multiple ways and which are heavily weighted with moral value. Since people talk about these last relationships in terms of sharing, I have called them sharing-networks. In addition to Raymond and Marie, twenty-four people from Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Anaktuvuk Pass were recorded as intensively involved in sharing-networks with the Neakok household. A further thirty were 'moderately' involved and twenty were recorded as 'infrequently' involved. In addition, approximately ten children (other than Raymond and Marie's own) were fed and/or provided shelter during the course of the year.²⁴⁾

For all of the Neakok 'intensive' networks the moral value of these relationships, which is great, is positively expressed in the idiom of 'being related' and is enacted in many ways. 'Family' is who you can stay with when travelling to another village, or where children 'go visit' for a meal or a night. The circulation of food is paralleled by the circulation of many other things: equipment, mutual help, children, political support. A one-to-one correspondence is not necessary and, I think, in important ways is not even considered as a possibility. Grumbling may well occur if, over the long run, the relationship appears too one-sided, or if social obligations are neglected. Relatives who 'come visit only when they want

something' are resented. That, I would venture to say, is not because the flow of goods is necessarily imbalanced, but because the sociality of the relationship is being suppressed.

In the 1980s, the Neakok intensive relationships were virtually all between productive equals. Beyond the marital relationship, these included both sets of parents, children, biological and adoptive siblings on both sides, and to a somewhat lesser extent, cousins, aunts and uncles. It is worthwhile looking at what happens when generational change enters the equation. Neakok's parents regularly contributed to the means his hunting even though they no longer hunted actively themselves. Their sharing-networks were smaller in number and although Raymond supplied them with meat from every catch, 'the people' rather than other related households were the next most important source of 'real food'.

The Bodfish household in Wainwright reflects similar patterns. During the 1980s, the household included a married couple in their eighties and an unmarried son, one of thirteen children. At his peak, Waldo, Sr. was an excellent hunter and even toward the end of his life still shot an occasional caribou. His wife, Mattie, is renowned for her cooking and her hospitality. According to life histories gathered from offspring and other relatives, both were famous for their generosity and their house was often filled with visitors. In the 1980s, their life was much quieter than it had been earlier. Their intensive network included ten people (in comparison to twenty-four for the Neakok household, see Table 2). Five adult sons, one daughter-in-law, three grandchildren and one sibling kept their stores of *niqipiaq* well stocked. One daughter-in-law, always ready to help, received 'shares' when she helped to butcher, and a granddaughter who was married to a non-Inupiaq came over to get meat whenever she needed it. Her experience in the world of institutions was often called upon when forms had to be understood and completed. The others received prepared food in the context of hospitality. Most of the remaining children and several more grandchildren made up their 'moderate' network (twelve as opposed to thirty for the Neakoks). This included as well, three relatives of their generation who were invited to come over and eat, 'so they can have Inupiaq food'. Many of the infrequent networks were maintained with people who lived elsewhere. All of the relationships remaining have endured over some time. One gift of Dall sheep (found only near Kaktovik) was sent, as Waldo, Sr. explained, because he had brought provisions to the Kaktovik man when the latter had been trapping near Wainwright some forty years ago. Ten years later, and after the passing of Waldo, Mattie's life is quieter still. A great-granddaughter has moved in, however, to make sure she's all right. The unmarried son has moved out; another stops by daily to eat. Her freezer remains full of Inupiaq food, now increasingly supplied by grand- and even great-grandchildren.

To contextualize this with more general information, interview responses from twenty-seven households to the question, 'where do you (regularly) get your Inupiaq food from?' revealed a broad range of sources and communities providing food in a similar pattern to both the Neakok and the Bodfish households (see Table

Table 2. Comparing networks by generation: Neakok and Bodfish households²⁵⁾

Network	('mature') Neakok household	('elder') Bodfish household
Intensive	ca. 24	ca. 10
Moderate	ca. 30	ca. 12
Infrequent	ca. 20	ca. 14
Total numbers	ca. 74	ca. 36

3). The sources mentioned were all plural categories and included: parents, children, grandparents/children, siblings, other relatives, 'the people', the Seniors' Center, and the store. The number of sources mentioned outside of household members themselves ranged from a high of six to a low of one other source of Inupiaq food. Taken together, households included in all age groups received food from an average of three sources in addition to household members and from two or more communities.

Significant sharing thus clearly takes place among kin. In this small-scale bilateral society, it is one way of marking who one's relatives 'are' within a large

Table 3. Sources of Inupiaq food across the generations²⁶⁾

Source	Elders	Mature adults	Young Adults
Parents		6	3
Children	12	1	1
Grandparents, Grandchildren	6	1	1
Siblings	2	7	2
Other relatives	6	7	4
The people	8	1	3
Seniors' Ctr.	6	NA	NA
The store	3	0	0
Range of sources			
6 sources	1 household	0	0
5 sources	1 household	0	0
4 sources	4 households	1 household	1 household
3 sources	5 households	4 households	3 households
2 sources	1 household	3 households	0
1 source	2 households	1 household	
Origin of source by community			
4 communities	1 household	1 household	
3 communities	5 households	1 household	
2 communities	5 households	3 households	3 households
1 community	3 households	3 households	2 households
Total households	14	8	5

universe of potential kin. Yet, when I interviewed one elder, hoping to elicit some clear-cut 'rules' about sharing among kin, he admonished, 'it is good to know who your relatives are, but we were taught to share with everybody.' To think about the significance of this statement, we must consider another important category of 'sharing'—one which is not based on the expectation of reciprocity. Communal distributions—beluga, polar bear, bowhead whale—mean that everyone receives raw meat to take home without incurring an individual responsibility to return anything to the hunters. A similar situation occurs when someone is invited to 'come over and get some meat' without being expected to return it in kind. Both of these are categorised as *aikliq-*. In addition, a lot of food travels from hunting families to non-related, non-productive members of the community. These are, on the face of it, non-reciprocal transactions. People who cannot produce food are provided it by those who can. They are neither expected to return it in kind at some later time, nor are they expected to return the favour in any of the multi-stranded forms of reciprocation enjoyed by the households described above. Raymond Neakok frequently presents meat to old people, or others who do not have hunters to provide for them. Some hunters 'keep a list' of people who will receive meat once household needs have been met [WORLD and SMYTHE 1986: 297]. Occasionally, people without food may ask for some without being expected to return it (*piatchiaq-*). Donations to the Women's Shelter, the Seniors' Center and jails in Fairbanks come into the same category.

Here the balance sheet does not reflect the relationship between human giver and recipient, but the moral relationship between the animal-who-gives and the hunter-who-shares, Lévi-Strauss' [1969] 'generalised exchange'.²⁷⁾ One man explicitly made the connection between his generosity to the people who had no hunters to support them and his future success: 'that way they'll be grateful and bless you for some more' [WORLD and SMYTHE 1986: 296]. Another said simply, 'The animals come to me, they know I share.' For whaling captains, this is very clearly institutionalised, for they should not go out in the spring without having cleaned out their ice cellar, distributing any left-over meat to those in need ('the poor', 'the widows', 'the elders'). In a recent Elders' Conference, Berna Brower related her daughter-in-law's experience to illustrate this point: '... [A]ll day she went out and gave away all the meat and fish to different homes she knew of. Then one of the Elders spoke and said she may receive something delicious to give away.' [IHLC n.d.: 2].

The ideal, 'we like to give to the old people' is carried out in practice in a way that also fits the differences exhibited by the Neakok/Bodfish networks (refer again to Table 3). Twelve of fourteen elder-headed households identified 'children' (plural) as an important source. Eight identified 'the people' (ie, non-kin) as an important source, whereas only six identified 'grandchildren' or 'other relatives'—the same number as identified 'the Seniors' Center', another non-kin based institution.²⁸⁾ Similarly, young single mothers identified 'the people' as frequently as they identified 'parents' as sources of Inupiaq food. Mature, active households,

on the other hand, do not depend on non-kin for food. The only 'mature' household to identify 'the people' as an important source of Inupiaq food was a mixed household in which the non-Inupiaq husband rarely went hunting and the Inupiaq wife had no relatives in the village.

DISCUSSION

At both the community and the household level, then, we see that access to shares and the moral value of sharing are institutionalised in terms of common, corporate and individual property. The 'mature' households included here are involved in sharing-networks predominantly with other producing households. Their networks are broad in terms of numbers, high in terms of intensity and their Inupiaq food comes almost entirely from kin. Elder and single-headed households who cannot take part in as many productive activities are much more likely to include 'others' in their important sources of Inupiaq food. The less possible mutual reciprocity is, the more prominent the role of non-kin in the provision of Inupiaq food. This brings up several questions that deserve some examination.

Questions Of Balance And Reciprocity

The system of earning shares ensures the systematic distribution of meat to those who were in any way involved in its procurement. A *ningik* is a concrete entity that implies a satisfactorily completed transaction that is not dependent on reciprocity. The morally valued custom of sharing also ensures a wide distribution of valuable resources. In contrast to the quit-claim nature of shares, 'sharing' is a process that depends on enduring relations. Between productive households intensively involved in morally obligated relationships, this takes the form of a constant flow of valued food, goods, services and company. This, then, is also about balance, but it is balance that can only be maintained through on-going interactions. The explicitly and eternally unbalanced forms of sharing, ie, the flow of food to people who will never be able to return food of comparable value is explicitly seen as an extension of an enduring relationship between animals and humans: the more one gives away, the more the animals are likely to give themselves up in return. In quite an important way, this is not about kinship—an issue to which we will return.

Most intensive inter-household sharing is, as we have seen, enacted among relatives and is not, in my experience, restricted to food-sharing. People explicitly denied that these accounts should be balanced; 'we never keep track' was often heard. Only through complaints did the ideal of balance come through. Despite the myth of not keeping track, mutual reciprocities are expected to be balanced in that they are continuous and, as I have argued through this chapter, generally are.

We should perhaps consider briefly a counter argument. Using Graburn's [1969] material from Sugluk, Pryor [1977: 73–98] examined the disjunction between the ideology of generous sharing and the practice of asymmetrical resource

accumulation in one Canadian Inuit community. Sallummiut valued sharing positively and evaluated their fellow villagers in terms of 'generosity' or 'stinginess'. Sharing was conceived of as a balanced exchange of goods and services 'between gross status equals'. When the actual transactions were analysed, however, an imbalance showed up between the women, the poor and the most powerful members of the community. Some of the poorer households were found to be 'net-givers'—even though they were classified as being inhospitable—while some of the richer were 'net-takers'. The 'myth of balanced accounts', Pryor argued, means that people do not have to keep track, thus allowing the system to be manipulated. High giving levels may sometimes be a strategy to improve one's status within the village. Those already holding prestigious positions may maintain their status by manipulating the 'symbols of generosity' without in fact giving away more than they receive.

North Slope material supports several of Pryor's points. A general ideology of egalitarianism is expressed in a number of ways, among them, 'we're all related' and 'we share with everybody'. This exists alongside a system of hierarchical relations that fosters asymmetrical accumulation and allots differential status to individuals. Clearly everything is not shared with everybody and not everything is shared equally. In Barrow as in Sugluk, conspicuous give-aways such as Nalukataq are in part symbolic expressions of *umialik* status, public proclamations of generosity. In Barrow, too, moral judgement may be passed in terms of stinginess, although I most frequently hear it applied to people who are well off. Neither term necessarily identifies which household is likely to welcome visitors with genuine warmth or large gifts of meat. Both Pryor and Collier [1988] point out that generosity does not bring about prestige so much as the prestigious are perceived to be generous. Generosity becomes, in Bourdieu's terms 'symbolic capital' [1977: 171–183], through which power is maintained, transformed and magnified. The 'myth of balanced accounts' fits in well with this model, for under it, those better off can continue to accumulate while those with less keep on giving.

Accepting that people in Barrow and Sugluk may conceive of their behaviour differently, it seems that there are at least two myths that can be applied to the different kinds of reciprocal relations we have discussed, neither of which conforms to Pryor's model. 'We never keep track' is a myth when applied to mutual reciprocities among productive households; 'we share with everybody' is a myth applied in the context of ritual sharing which brings the animals back. On the North Slope at least, it would be a mistake to leave out of their measurement, as Pryor and Graburn seem to, shared labour, equipment, space, and goods brought into the house. But the greatest difficulty, of course, is that incommensurables are being shared. The emphasis is less on the equivalence of things as I have said, than on the on-going reciprocal process.

In Barrow, the most intensive sharing occurs between households of close kin - certainly people who are 'gross status equals'. 'We share with everybody' does not mean 'we share everything'. On a day-to-day basis, household needs are met first.

Only some things (ie, communally shared animals) and some contexts (ie, communal feasts) are constructed so that literally everyone in the community is entitled to receive food. In addition, some people. ('the old people'; 'the ones in need') are given food without expectation of return. This distribution certainly does not mean 'everybody' in a literal sense. Although many anecdotes of community solicitude for the aged and infirm were provided, others recounted stories of poverty and hunger. As I have already argued, this sharing in fact distributes significant quantities of meat, but it is largely symbolic. This is the sharing that brings the animals back, because 'the people' (or 'everybody') will 'bless you for some more.' The accounts are 'balanced' when the animals give themselves up to the hunters once again. Generalised distribution among humans is in fact, one link in the chain of generalised exchange between humans and animals that is thought of as a gift relationship, ie, one that generates a specific debt.

Sharing begins with the animals who share of themselves; their continued abundance may only be ensured by sharing Inupiaq food between humans. 'You cannot,' I frequently heard, 'share money the way you can share food.' Money and purchased food can enter the 'subsistence' realm if they support the hunting effort. As a contribution toward the production of 'real food', either entitles one to 'shares', but neither is part of 'sharing'. Significantly, *attaqsi-*, the only sharing term that means 'to borrow something that must be returned in kind', is explicitly restricted to non-consumable items. Money is less shareable, according to one person, because 'you can return money, whereas with food, you can't give it back.'

The Question Of Shared Substance

Niqipiaq, or hunted meat, is an ambiguous category. As a 'share' it is alienable, separable. In many cases it may be commodified and sold or traded. As shared food, it is connective and cements sharing-networks. Many reciprocities are enacted along these lines, but only hunted food extends the relationship to the animals and it is this relationship that must be maintained if the animals are to return. As I documented sharing-networks it became clear that some households shared only hunted food while others shared hunted food and other forms of assistance. No sharing-networks existed, to my knowledge, in the absence of *niqipiaq*. It is literally the sine qua non of these reciprocal relationships.²⁹⁾ The distribution of the whale plays on these ambiguities most explicitly for the feasts cannot be satisfactorily carried out without the conversion of 'shares' into shared food.

And here we should return briefly to the question of kinship. Although the most intensive sharing-networks are those among kin, in important ways they do not provide the shared substance that makes you kin. The transformative nature of Inupiaq kinship that allows *il* (literally, my additions) to be added on and dropped off of a personal kinship universe has long been documented.³⁰⁾ They are, of course, not alone in this capability, but in many other cases it is not shared

genetic substance, but shared nurturing substance that enables the transformation of non-kin into kin.³¹⁾ The sharing-networks along which Inupiaq kinship relations are maintained are about the work of kinship—about the multi-stranded reciprocities that involve doing things.

The fact of sharing food is what makes one properly Inupiaq, not a proper relative. 'I'm Inupiaq; I eat Inupiaq food'—a phrase I have heard many many times since 1980—implies connection with those who share; and it expresses the relationship between animals and humans. Shared food is talked about in cosmological terms: 'animals come to those who share'; it is talked about socially: 'sharing is the nicest thing about living in a village'; it is talked about as an expression of ethnicity: 'that's how we do things; we share.' It is the connective tissue of social relationships but this is in no way restricted to your *ilaḥ*—or kinship additions. For those 'additions' to work, many others kinds of shared activities need to be acted upon. In fact, as we have seen, the less able one is to engage in those activities, the more one depends on non-kin relations for access to Inupiaq food.

Questions Of Change: Sharing As Continued Custom; Sharing As Adaptation To Change

The sharing-networks through which this food circulates have undergone some modifications. In thirty-one structured interviews, fifteen people thought that sharing was about the same as it had been when they were growing up; eleven thought there was less sharing overall; they generally maintained that sharing within families was probably constant, while communal sharing had lessened. Only two people felt that sharing had decreased within the family. The rapid increase of young single mothers and of mixed marriages means that there are suddenly many adults without hunting spouses to support them. These (primarily) young people depend on a broadened network to provide them with Inupiaq food. In some cases, they help with 'subsistence' activities, thus earning shares in the customary way open to unattached women. Others reciprocate by doing paper work or other tasks demanding the skills of formal education. As already mentioned, most of them also identified 'the people' as an important source of hunted food.³²⁾

We should perhaps return briefly to the issue of legal prohibitions against selling hunted meat, examining whether sharing-networks are 'merely' an artefact of recent laws. Burch [1980] has established that meat was sold to traders (ie, outsiders) by the turn of the century as well as gifted through trading partners well before that [1970] and Sonnenfeld [1975] suggests that it was beginning to be sold locally by the 1950s. Whether or not the commoditized relationship would ultimately have replaced all other forms of distribution of hunted meat if legal restrictions had not been imposed remains an unanswered question. The question itself is based on two assumptions, both possible, but neither necessarily true. The first is that if food can be sold, it will be sold to everyone; the second is that if people today do not sell it, is because of the law. Material already presented shows

that Inupiaq exchange transactions involve categories of things ('shares', trade goods) that were owned and alienable and further, that exchanges themselves took place in spheres of exchange relations which were defined differently (see Burch [1988]). Increasing commoditization in one sphere does not entail a transformation of sharing as the expression of the relations in another. Fish illustrates the contemporary case as well. It may be sold legally and frequently is, but this has not removed it from sharing-networks as an appreciated food.

What is more interesting, I think, is that restricted meat is not sold. People respect 'white' laws, but they also break them. When hunting caribou was restricted, many otherwise law-abiding men ignored the ban to feed their families. A black market flourishes for prohibited substances such as alcohol or walrus tusks, but none has developed for hunted meat. Nor has a large-scale substitution of purchased food occurred which, given levels of employment on the North Slope, is certainly a possibility. Instead people with large financial resources frequently intensify their own subsistence 'investments' (eg, chartering a plane instead of travelling by snow-machine, thereby reducing travelling time), or support the subsistence activities of unemployed kin. Those who do sell meat, must demonstrate need if they are to avoid disapproving gossip.

Today's sharing patterns, then, may not be determined by the absence or presence of U.S. restrictions on the sale of hunted food, but they certainly are acted upon within complex late twentieth century economic relations. In a recent article Humphrey and Hugh-Jones [1992] argue that barter—particularly in post-socialist contexts—is more satisfactorily thought of as one solution to the problem of money than as fossilised evidence of the evolution of exchange mechanisms. This seems to me a strong argument that can be usefully applied to sharing in the late twentieth century as well, although the consequences are quite different. Sharing continues to be of fundamental importance to the social lives of Barrow Inupiat. In part this is because key cosmological values are supported thereby. At the same time, however, it also has the potential to give people access to Inupiaq food they might not otherwise have (from 'the people') in a way that remains unambiguously social. It is not simply a 'left-over' of some imagined non-commoditized past; it is a late twentieth century adaptation to late twentieth century conditions.

CONCLUSION

With this material we should turn specifically to the categories so often modelled in economic anthropology: gifts and commodities—and think about them with relation to shares and sharing.

On the North Slope 'shares' are portions of a whole in which people have a non-negotiable claim. They are, as Humphrey [1998] argues for Mongolian material 'allocations from the whole' to which people have a claim because they are part of a whole. But shares are not always claimed through the same sorts of

relations. When hunters *autaaqtut*, they divide an animal into shares in which specific people have a claim because they have earned it, as individuals, through some contribution to the hunting process: labour, knowledge, goods, equipment and so forth. The whole animal is allocated by shares to the set of people who have been responsible for the hunt. It is explicitly about obligation that demands a return, but it is a discreet process, not generalised in any way. The people who have a right to make a claim are identifiable and the conditions under which such a claim can be made are limited to each hunt. Once a hunter has received his *ningik*, the expectation created by his contribution has been satisfied. The hunting partner relationship may be renewed if the same hunters go out again, but each time is a new beginning. Importantly, and this is something that can be seen again and again, this might be thought *quid pro quo* in that the obligation has been satisfied, but it is not about equivalent value. All contributions 'count' so that 'good stories' will earn the same share as the provision of gasoline on a caribou hunt and whaling crew members who come out after work receive the same share as those who remain on the ice for weeks at a time. It is about a return that is embedded in social interaction, but it is not about reciprocity, for no one is initiating a transaction with another that demands a personal return. All participants are contributing and taking, but no one is 'paying'.³³⁾ In this way, this material fits Woodburn's recent argument quite precisely even though the grounds for being able to claim a share are very clearly linked to participation in hunting.

Animals categorised as communal resources are turned into 'shares' by the same principle writ large. The whole animal must be allocated to members of the whole community. And community in its broadest sense encompasses anyone who happens to be in town at the time.

Sharing, on the other hand, is about reciprocity, but here we must also be careful to be clear about what we mean. The intensive sharing-networks that characterise the interactions among close kin are about constant flows between persons. This reciprocity—which I have called *mutual*—is constructed as a flow between equals; it does not increase status through public gestures of generosity. It is 'balanced' in that both sides must maintain the flow, but it is not about commensurable exchange. Two hours of childcare does not equal one invitation to 'come get some food.' What makes food shareable where money is not is precisely that it cannot be returned whereas money can be. *Attaqsi*—the return of like for like, which is often translated into English as 'a loan'—is restricted to nonconsumable items. To engage in mutual reciprocity you have to be able to reciprocate something else. Thus, while the shared *niqipiaq* which maintains the animal/human relationship forms the core of these flows, reciprocity is assumed at this most intense level to include many sorts of support that cannot be weighed up against each other. Indeed, to echo Barry Lopez, it would be difficult to imagine how to do it.³⁴⁾

Generalised reciprocity as Sahlins has defined the term does indeed exist—*piatchiaq* giving without expectation of return—but it does not happen within the

same circle of relationships. Rather this sort of sharing involves giving food to ‘the people’ ‘the elders’, ‘the needy’, ‘the widows and orphans’ who will never be in a position to repay. But we also need to understand this reciprocity with a Lévi-Straussan twist for it depends on the circulation of giving rather than simply giving as a back and forth act. The reciprocity comes from the animals who will ‘bless you for some more.’ And within this relationship we hear the language of gift. The whale’s gift of itself generates a human debt and obligates the receiver/hunter to a specific ‘counter-gift’: public evidence (to the whale) that the gift has been shared with other humans. The sharing is generalised because no debt is generated between specific individuals, but it is reciprocal nonetheless in the social recognition that the one form of generosity is dependent on the other.

Sahlins’ insistence that ‘reciprocity’ should not be categorised simply as ‘equal exchange’ continues to be important for understanding the circulation of resources. But the model itself—in its definition of balanced, positive and negative reciprocity, —implicitly rests on the assumption that such exchanges must be comparable. Sometimes this is, of course, true. Customarily, for instance, Inupiaq messenger feasts involved the gifts of goods which generated obligations between individuals that had to remain balanced if they were to be maintained (see Burch [1970; 1988]). Sharing on the North Slope—and I suspect elsewhere as well—is, however, not usefully understood within those parameters. It is perhaps this incommensurability that separates this moral, social reciprocity from the debt incurred that marks the gift.

This brings me to a final point. Many shares, of fish or blubber, once allocated, can be converted into commodities (fish, seal oil) that do have measurable value; as shareable substance, they do not. Now the idea that things have social lives during which their categories change is by no means new. Appadurai’s [1986] argument, however, was not about sharing, but about challenging models which oppose gifts and commodities. Neither the social life of Inupiat, nor of the things upon which they depend, can be thought about systematically unless sharing, shares, gifts and commodities and the relationships between them are placed within the frame. Nor can it be assumed that sharing either ‘does’ or ‘says’ the same thing in different cultural contexts. On the North Slope, sharing is clearly experienced as an intensely positive way of carrying out all manner of social relations; much Australian material suggests that sharing may be obligatory, but it is experienced as oppressive rather than supportive. The idea that it underpins the social relation between humans and animals is by no means universal. The major importance of this material, I suggest, is not that we must complexify our models of sharing to understand the social lives of hunter-gatherers, although that is certainly true, but that we need to do so in order to understand economic lives in general.

Appendix A: Intensive sharing-networks for one household, 1986

People included in this category shared food, space, goods and/or helped on a frequent, regular or

occasional basis. That is, more than one category of sharing was recorded and the frequency was high. In addition to Raymond and Marie Neakok, at least twenty-four people from Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Anaktuvuk Pass were involved intensively. The frequency was weighted in the following way: frequent means that support occurred almost daily—certainly more than once a week; regular support took place on a consistent basis; occasional support could be counted on at regular times (eg, whaling); infrequent refers to support that was given only once or twice during the course of the project. What follows is a summary of the networks. For a narrative elaboration of these, see Bodenhorn [1988a: 88–95].

Relationship	Kind of support	Frequency of support
<i>Parents</i>		
From A/H (RN's parents)	prepared food; hospitality labour; hunting equipment other goods	frequent regular occasional
To A/H	non-prepared food help/labour goods	frequent regular infrequent
To & From S/S (MN's parents)	non-prepared food space labour childcare	regular regular occasional occasional
To S/S	money	infrequent
<i>Siblings</i>		
From RN sister/bro-in-law (RN's sis. by adoption)	labour social support prepared food fish	frequent frequent regular
To sis/bro-in-law	social support prepared food equipment non-prepared food accommodation	frequent regular regular occasional occasional
From RN's bro/sis-in-law (half-bro by birth)	equipment shared labour (hunting) other help non-prepared food space (ice cellar)	regular occasional regular occasional occasional
To them	labour, meals, social time	occasional
From MN's bro (1)	shared hunting labour other labour camping supplies/equipment childcare	regular frequent occasional occasional
To MN's bro	labour (hunting) labour (sewing)	regular occasional

	childcare	occasional
From bro (2)	labour	frequent
	household goods	regular
To bro (2)	accommodation	frequent
	prepared food	frequent
To MN's 3 sisters	accommodation, meals	regular
From them	labour	regular
<i>Offspring</i>		
From son (1)	shared labour (hunting)	regular
	money	regular
	non-prepared food (sent from Nuiqsut)	occasional
To him	food, clothing, shelter	frequent
From daughter	labour	frequent
	money	occasional
To her	food, clothing, shelter	frequent
From son (2)	labour	occasional
	labour (hunting)	infrequent
<i>Others</i>		
To and from Anaktuvuk Pass relatives	space, food, territory, knowledg	occasional
To Children other than R/M's	food	frequent
	space (sleeping over)	regular
	fosterage	occasional

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Notes

- 1) This work was sponsored jointly by the Inupiat History, Language and Culture Commission and the Alaska Humanities Forum and was presented in a report to them [BODENHORN 1988a; 1988b]. Much of the information contained in this paper is identified by name, in part because the people who talked to me about how important

- sharing was to them have never been anonymous 'informants', in part because Inupiat—like academics—follow the custom of identifying by name the source of their information. During the course of my initial research for the History, Language and Culture Commission, all of the participants in the project were asked if they wished to be named, or to remain anonymous when their words were written down.
- 2) This distinction was one I made first in my dissertation [BODENHORN 1989] and have alluded to in various ways in several subsequent papers [BODENHORN 1988c, 1990, 1997, 2000]. This chapter takes the distinction as its central rather than peripheral focus. Inupiat means 'real people' and is the collective term the people of northern and north-western Alaska use to identify themselves. The singular as well as adjectival form is Inupiaq.
 - 3) As will be clear throughout the chapter, I am not suggesting that Inupiaq social organization conforms to Woodburn's model of Immediate Return systems. Inupiat reflect many aspects of what he defines as Delayed Return systems as well as many of those he attributes to Immediate Return systems.
 - 4) In the recent edited volume on rethinking property relations, for instance, [HANN 1998], Woodburn's article on sharing among hunter gatherers was the only discussion of sharing as an institutionalized economic activity in the entire volume.
 - 5) Research conducted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research in the late 1970s found no indication that contact with 'Outside' resources—money, education, time spent off the Slope—serves to lessen Inupiat interest in 'subsistence' activities. In this context, 'subsistence' refers to a way of life supported by the social networks involved in the harvest and distribution of hunted or gathered food. In this sense, it bears little resemblance to the economic definition of minimum meeting of survival needs. Income and the number of hunted food resources were positively correlated; those with 'outside' education and/or 'outside' living experiences not only participated in slightly more 'subsistence' activities than did those with no 'outside' experiences, they spent slightly more time out of every year doing them [KRUSE 1982: 28, 30]. In 1984 and 1985, my interviews with adult hunters and with high school students provided a similar picture. Those with the financial resources frequently counterbalanced limited 'free time' by spending more money on transportation such as chartering a small plane to fly out to fish-camp (see also Worl and Smythe [1986: 196–209]).
 - 6) Humphrey [personal communication] pointed out that among Tuvimians in Mongolia, even close family may not be trusted with the loan of valuable equipment. In my experience, trucks and snow-machines were rarely loaned to anyone, but rather shared, that is, used together. Other equipment might be loaned over a wide range of relatives and partners. The issue of who 'should' be trusted was discussed only obliquely; the refusal of a loan was criticized heavily if the people involved were relatives.
 - 7) see also Ingold [1986: 227], Altman and Peterson [1988: 79], Barnard and Woodburn [1988: 17; 1998: passim].
 - 8) The following describes division as it was explained to me. For a more elaborated discussion of terms associated with the division of the catch, see Burch [1988: 101–105], Luton [1985] and Nelson [1969], for sharing rules embedded in species-by-species discussions of Inupiat hunting patterns, and Worl and Smythe [1986: 282–309] for general descriptions within Barrow households. See also Bodenhorn [forthcoming] for variations between spring and fall whaling share division.
 - 9) This is not to suggest that none of these people are engaged in on-going reciprocal relationships. The nature of this transaction created no obligation to reciprocate.

- 10) The captaincy is in fact often spoken of as a dual position, 'the whaling captain couple' (see, IHLC [n.d.]).
- 11) This is only the briefest of sketches. See Alaska Consultants [1984], Bodenhorn [forthcoming], Lowenstein [1981], Luton [1985], Nelson [1969, 1981], Pulo [1980] and Worl [1980] for more extensive information.
- 12) *Maktak* is the edible black skin and blubber which is consumed with intense pleasure.
- 13) The 1991 Elders' Conference held in Barrow focused on the issue of whaling and generated detailed discussions illustrating the extent to which this remains a lively part of people's awareness. These sessions, which were held from June 9–11, 1991, have been transcribed, translated and archived at the Inupiaq History, Language and Culture Commission in Barrow; they are currently in preparation for publication.
- 14) According to Burch [personal communication 1988], this was not the case in the nineteenth century but rather developed during the course of commercial whaling when Inupiat became more mobile. It certainly seems to have been the case throughout the entire twentieth century—during and after commercial whaling.
- 15) This is quite different in the fall since the crews take off from the shore in motor driven boats on a daily basis. The absence of a lead makes both the migration path and the movements of individual boats more random. 'First strike' status is therefore less clear cut.
- 16) This entire procedure varies slightly from village to village. For a description of Point Hope practices, see Worl [1980] and Pulo [1980]. For Wainwright, see Nelson [1981], Luton [1985]. For an extremely detailed discussion of current Barrow practices, see M. Ahmaogak [forthcoming].
- 17) Stackhouse [nd: 2], but cf Worl [1980: 317] who states that shares are designated up to the 7th and 8th boats. My understanding in Barrow is that shares are equal beyond the first two crews
- 18) Fall whaling follows the same general principle, that contribution to the effort earns one a share of the whale. The division of labour, however, is more flexible. Butchering is not confined necessarily to crew members and I have seen adolescent girls as well as boys helping with the task and earning full shares in return (see Bodenhorn [forthcoming]).
- 19) This is becoming increasingly elaborated. Whereas only *uunaalit* were served in 1986, by 1997, the event included the provision of virtually an entire meal, including mikigaq, goose soup, Eskimo donuts, cakes and hot and cold drinks (see Ahmaogak, [forthcoming]).
- 20) Households in this case are defined by the commensal unit. Unmarried children who may sleep elsewhere but eat with parents, for instance, are counted.
- 21) James Nageak, personal communication. The context was a gathering of representatives from many agencies who were regularly faced with the need for interpreters.
- 22) This information is based on 145 visits made between August 1984 and July, 1986, the period during which I asked if they would be willing to participate in the project. Many prior and subsequent visits have been made which were not recorded as regularly. The documentation of what I have called 'sharing-networks' involved recording what was shared (food, equipment, knowledge, child care, time, space, money), how often and with whom. Networks were classified as 'intensive' if more than one category of sharing took place on a frequent (daily, weekly) or regular (1–2 times a month or more) basis; 'moderate' if sharing occurred several times during the course of a year and 'infrequent' if single or sporadic interactions were noted.

- 23) Anaktuvuk Pass households are related to Marie through her father who was born there; Nuiqsut is her parental home; Kodiak was the home of Raymond's adoptive sister, who was married to a Koniag man; their daughter was attending school in Anchorage during much of the mid-eighties; the aunt (related-through -the-generations -somehow) who had given Raymond a rifle for a present lived in Fairbanks. Raymond's natal mother (long deceased) was from Kaktovik. Even though Raymond was adopted out at birth, natal ties extending between Barrow and Kaktovik remain enlivened through sharing. Meat sent to Atkasuk and Point Lay was not discussed with me in terms of kinship.
- 24) See Appendix A for a more specific breakdown of what was shared, how frequently and with whom.
- 25) It should be pointed out that although both the Neakoks and the Bodfishes reviewed this material and I am reasonably confident to have included all the members of the intensive networks, both the moderate and infrequent networks may well be somewhat underreported. Not reflected in this table is the fact that during the project period, at least ten children who were not R/M's own were recorded as sleeping and/or eating over.
- 26) Elders was so defined if they were fifty years or older. Seventeen interviews in fourteen households were conducted with elders. Mature adults were those between 35–50 years of age; nine interviews in eight households were conducted with this category. Young adults fell into the 20–34 year old range; five interviews were conducted in this category. Interviews were conducted from a list generated randomly by the North Slope Borough from its census data.
- 27) The crucial aspect of Lévi-Strauss' model of generalized exchange is that things (or, in his case, women) are sent in one direction and are received from another. This is quite different from Sahlins' similarly labelled generalized reciprocity in which the tolerance for long-term imbalance is such that the reciprocal aspect seems to disappear altogether.
- 28) The Seniors' Center in Barrow provides hot lunches for anyone over sixty on a daily basis. Meals are generally catered by a local restaurant and donated food is usually served at a monthly potluck, or more frequently if it needs to be served immediately. During August, 1986, nineteen people donated seals, ugruich, ducks, etc. If hunting is poor, donations decrease. Food occasionally is sent from other villages. Barter Island, for instance, sent fresh whale meat and maktak when they caught a whale in the fall of 1986. In the same way, plane loads of whale meat have flown between Barrow, Wainwright and Point Hope.
- 29) This quite clearly affected how I received Inupiaq food. Friends would occasionally give me small quantities of food, usually after I had visited, been offered food and expressed my appreciation of the taste. When I travelled to other villages, I always brought groceries, usually items not easily purchased at the village store. We all ate them, as well as Inupiaq food. These contributions did not necessitate a return of any kind beyond my inclusion in meals. If, however, I helped with subsistence activities, or if I brought some 'Inupiaq food' with me, I was always presented with Inupiaq food to take home.
- 30) see, eg, Bodenhorn [1997, 2000], Burch [1975], Guemple [1988], Heinrich and Anderson [1971] for different interpretations of this. Burch's [1975] account is the most extensive of these. The correct term for relative is *ilagiich*, my addition, in a two-way living relationship. Local practice is currently to truncate that to *ilya*—which is then given an English plural: 'all my *ilyas* were there'.
- 31) see, eg, Carsten [1995] for Malays of Pulau Langkawi; Malinowski [1932], Mosko [1998] for the Trobriand Islands.
- 32) This tendency seems to be intensified off of the Slope. In my experience, sharing-

networks in Fairbanks, for instance, are very broad indeed. As soon as anyone receives meat from their home village, friends and relatives are rung up and told to 'come eat'. See also Nancy Fogel-Chance [1993] for her discussion of sharing among Inupiaq women in Anchorage.

- 33) See Humphrey [1998: passim] for an extended discussion of shares, 'hierarchical shareholding' and her challenge to the reciprocal model among the Buryat of Russian Mongolia.
- 34) 'For many Eskimo, Lopez says [1986: 200], 'to make this separation [between humans and animals] is analogous to cutting oneself off from light or water. It is hard to imagine how to do it ...'

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