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The Best Part of Life: Subsistence Hunting, Ethnicity, and Economic Adaptation among Young Adult Inuit Males

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ABSTRACT. This paper examines the economic adaptations and subsistence hunting involvement of householders between the ages of 20 and 35 in the Copper Inuit community of Holman. Social, economic, and political changes throughout the Canadian Arctic have made it impossible for young adults to pursue the same mixed economic strategies as previous generations. A general decrease in subsistence hunting involvement is characteristic of the younger generation. Nevertheless, some young householders have made a conscious effort to remain active in subsistence hunting and fishing to provide for themselves and related households. Some have even increased subsistence hunting involvement as their own parents age and become increasingly infirm. Other householders are less active in hunting and fishing, but continue to view land-based harvesting as central to a sense of Inuit identity. The motivations, economic position, and family background of a sample of active and less active young adult hunters are explored in an attempt to understand the pressures experienced by young adults as they strive to make a place in a northern society radically different from that of their parents at a similar age. While the authors recognize the economic value of subsistence harvesting and the foods that result from it, we also emphasize the less easily quantified dimensions of subsistence ideology and its impact upon physical health, psychological well-being, and community integration.

Key words: subsistence, harvest effort, Inuit identity, young adults, food sharing, health, self-esteem

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article examine les adaptations économiques et l'activité de chasse de subsistance de chefs de ménage âgés de 20 à 35 ans, dans la communauté Copper Inuit de Holman. Les changements sociaux, économiques et politiques qui ont eu lieu dans tout l'Arctique canadien ont fait qu'il est impossible pour les jeunes adultes de poursuivre les mêmes stratégies d'économie mixte que les générations précédentes. La génération la plus jeune se caractérise par une diminution généralisée de l'activité de chasse de subsistance. Néanmoins, certains jeunes chefs de ménage ont fait un effort conscient pour poursuivre la chasse et la pêche de subsistance afin de subvenir à leurs propres besoins et à ceux de ménages apparentés. Certains consacrent même plus de temps à la chasse de subsistance à mesure que leurs propres parents vieillissent et deviennent physiquement incapables de se livrer à ces activités. D'autres chefs de ménage se consacrent maintenant moins à la chasse et à la pêche, mais continuent de considérer le prélèvement des ressources naturelles comme essentiel à l'identité inuit. On a exploré les motivations, la situation économique et les antécédents familiaux d'un échantillon de jeunes chasseurs adultes, certains plus actifs que d'autres, afin d'essayer de comprendre les pressions ressenties par les jeunes adultes alors qu'ils luttent pour se faire une place dans une société nordique radicalement différente de celle de leurs parents au même âge. Bien que les auteurs reconnaissent la valeur économique de la récolte de subsistance et de la nourriture qui en résulte, ils insistent aussi sur la dimension plus difficile à quantifier de l'idéologie de subsistance, et sur ses retombées sur la santé physique, le bien-être psychologique et l'intégration de la collectivité.

Mots clés: subsistance, temps consacré au prélèvement, identité inuit, jeunes adultes, partage de la nourriture, santé, estime de soi

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INTRODUCTION

Why is hunting important to me? Tradition I guess. We need traditional food and the kids gotta learn how we grew up. They like to go out too. It's good for them and me to be out there. It's the best kind of R and R there is. It gets cold sometimes, but you gotta do it.

(J.M., August 16, 1992, Baseline Interview)

My uncle never goes out hunting. He just sits around at home. My Mom's been talking to him, telling him that he should go out hunting sometime. My uncle said that he didn't like to go out hunting because he doesn't like to kill animals. It must be boring to sit around all day. He's missing the best part of life, that guy. Hunting is the best part of life.

(R.K., November 28, 1993, Hunting & Food Sharing Journal)

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The rate of social, economic, and political change in the Canadian Arctic has had a profound influence upon the youngest cohort of Inuit adults, most of whom represent the first generation to be raised exclusively within the context of centralized communities. Less likely to pursue the same mixed economic strategies of their parents and grandparents (the combination of subsistence hunting, trapping, carving, and casual employment), these young adults must rely upon new strategies for supporting themselves and their families. Through formal schooling, vocational training, and exposure to southern mass media, these young adults have acquired aspirations and values that govern their choice of occupation as well as preferences for entertainment, family size, material goods, foods consumed, and involvement in subsistence hunting and fishing.

Among the older generation of adults (40 and over), subsistence hunting and fishing remain exceedingly important and viable economic strategies, providing food and raw materials that are shared among a large network of related families. Numerous studies conducted in the Alaskan and Canadian Arctic have established the importance of such subsistence activities to contemporary settlement economies and social relations (see especially Wenzel, 1981, 1986, 1991; Burch, 1985; Kruse, 1986; Wolfe and Walker, 1987; Smith and Wright, 1989; Fall, 1990; Huntington, 1992). Despite the continued importance of this "traditional" domain, fewer and fewer young Inuit display the same degree of commitment to or even interest in subsistence hunting and fishing. This lack of interest is due to a number of factors, including 1) inadequate training in the techniques of hunting and fishing due to the requirements of western style schooling, 2) lack of access to necessary funds for the purchase of capital equipment used in hunting/fishing, 3) changing dietary preferences on the part of some younger adults who are more dependent upon store-bought food than land foods, 4) lack of interest in becoming involved in economic activities that have become increasingly marginalized from an economic perspective (by this we mean trapping and seal harvesting), 5) an increasing dependence upon wage employment that severely limits hunting and fishing activities to weekends, after work hours, and vacations, and 6) increasing "addiction" to organized sports such as basketball, hockey, and baseball (Condon, 1993; Collings, 1994; Condon, in press). Thus, while many northern Natives fear the loss or curtailment of subsistence hunting rights through increasing government regulation and industrial development, another significant cause for concern is the loss of subsistence knowledge and lack of motivation on the part of the younger generation of Inuit.

The older generation of Inuit hunters grew up at a time when few economic alternatives to harvesting existed. A young man learned the skills of hunting and trapping or he became a burden to his family or community. This was also a period when fox trapping and, somewhat later, seal hunting were reasonable and self-sustaining economic pursuits. The younger generation of adults, however, has come of age within a very different social and economic milieu. The marginalization of trapping and sealskin harvesting combined with the availability of western education, vocational training, and social transfer payments has given rise to a different set of occupational strategies on the part of young Inuit households. These strategies may or may not involve a commitment to subsistence hunting and fishing.

This paper reports on research conducted between July 1992 and July 1993 in the Copper Inuit community of Holman, which is currently being replicated in the Baffin Island community of Clyde River by George Wenzel and Eric Loring of McGill University. Since data are still being collected in Clyde River, this presentation will concentrate solely upon preliminary findings from Holman. In it we address the issue of hunting involvement as an economic as well as an ideological strategy for young people coping with rapid social change in a small and relatively isolated northern community. Since the social, economic, and political dimensions of social change are roughly the same throughout the North, we believe that observations for young Inuit adults in Holman may be generalized to all of northern Canada.

The inspiration for the present research is an outgrowth of 16 years of study in the community of Holman (RC) and over 20 years of research in the Eastern Arctic community of Clyde River (GW). Both communities have seen social and economic changes which have resulted in 1) the eradication of commercial seal hunting and trapping as viable cash-generating activities and 2) the diminution of subsistence hunting and fishing, most noticeably on the part of the younger generation. Nevertheless, there are certain young adults in both communities who have clearly opted to remain active in the subsistence domain, even though it has become increasingly challenging to do so. As expected, these individuals are counterbalanced by young adults who are completely inactive in hunting or who hunt only on a sporadic basis.

By concentrating upon a sample of 15 to 20 young adults in each community who represent the full range of subsistence involvement, we explored 1) the economics of subsistence hunting among the younger generation of Inuit adults, 2) the manner in which involvement or noninvolvement in subsistence hunting is balanced against other economic activities, 3) the degree to which young households are integrated with the food-sharing networks of older Inuit households, and 4) what consequences these factors have upon young adults' sense of ethnic pride and affiliation.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research in Holman was conducted over a 12-month period between July 1992 and June 1993 by the senior author and his graduate assistant, Peter Collings. Permission to conduct the research had already been obtained from the Holman Hamlet Council several months prior to arrival. Upon arriving in the community, the senior researcher met with the Council and described in greater detail the nature of the research project, encouraging feedback on the research design and objectives. Initial interviews were conducted with

a convenience sample of 20 young male household heads, all married, between the ages of 23 and 35. Each initial interview was preceded by a verbal decription of the research project and an assurance of confidentiality. Potential participants were also informed that they could refuse to answer any specific questions and that they could drop out of the project whenever they so desired. Only two people refused to participate at the initial interview stage.

About half of the individuals successfully recruited were people with whom the senior author had worked closely in previous research projects (specifically the adolescent research project of 1982 to 1983 and 1987 to 1988). As a result, there exists an excellent longitudinal data base concerning this population (see Condon, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1993; Condon and Stern, 1993). Thus, individuals were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study and on the senior author's past knowledge of their reliability as informants. We made a concerted effort to include both active as well as occasional (or less active) hunters. The final sample of 20 individuals, we believe, constitutes a highly representative sample of young adult males in the target population (n = 30). The only individuals purposely excluded were young males married in from neighboring communities. These individuals (n = 8) were excluded because we believed that their inexperience with travel in the Holman region would adversely affect subsistence hunting participation.

The initial or entry interviews were oriented to collecting baseline data on household demographics and economics, hunting equipment, hunting/fishing history, recent hunting and fishing activities, and general attitudes concerning the importance of hunting and food sharing. After the initial interviews, all study participants were interviewed every two weeks about harvest effort, food sharing (both giving and receiving), food eaten over the last 48 hours, meals eaten at other households, changes in employment, and sources of income. These structured interviews were usually followed by more open-ended questioning and casual conversation regarding hunting, employment, and food sharing activities and attitudes, often over cups of coffee or tea. In general, our best ethnographic data derive from these informal post-interview sessions. Periodically during the research, informants were asked to participate in other data collection procedures related to food sharing, food intake, and hunting activities. The biweekly interviewing continued through July 1993.

By the end of the research period, each participant had responded to an average of 19 interview sessions. Attrition was minimal. Of an initial sample of 20 individuals, two asked to exit the study after several months and two others were eliminated because they were unwilling to respond seriously to questions. Thus, the final sample consisted of 16 individuals, of whom eight are relatively active in hunting and fishing and eight are less active. Classification of these individuals as active hunters or occasional hunters was done on the basis of card sorts in which our participants were asked to evaluate the hunting involvement of all adult males (aged 20–40) in the community on a 1–5 scale. This process provided valuable information concerning the criteria local people use to evaluate individual hunting involvement. Given the high degree of agreement in the evaluations and the fact that they made intuitive sense, we decided to use these as the basis for classifying individuals as either active or occasionally active participants in the subsistence hunting and fishing domain. Not surprisingly, all of the active hunters, with the exception of one 25-year-old, were young adults in their early 30s, while all the occasional hunters were in their 20s. Thus, any comparison between the active and occasional hunters in our sample is also a contrast between older and younger adults. Tables 1 and 2 summarize basic employment, demographic, and economic information on the 20 households at the time of initial selection.

TABLE 1. Employment profile of sample households, Holman, N.W.T., 1992–1993.

Sample	Casual Labour		Employed		Unemployed
	only	+ hunting, trapping, carving	Full-time	Part-time	
Husbands (n = 20)					
Active hunting households (10)	0	2	6	2	0
Occasional hunting households (10)	0	0	4	3	3
Total	0	2	10	5	3
Wives (n = 20)					
Active hunting households (10)	0	1	3	1	5
Occasional hunting households (10)	1	0	1	2	6
Total	1	1	4	3	11

The prominent use of card sorts as part of the Holman methodology requires some elaboration. When our 18 informants were asked to sort a list of all adult males in the community between 20 and 40 years of age into five piles according to the criterion of hunting involvement, we also included the names of 10 highly active hunters in their 50s and early 60s. This was done to provide some kind of baseline for what constitutes "active hunting." We made sure that informants based their evaluations on general level of hunting involvement over the past three years in order to avoid any momentary spikes or troughs that might result from extenuating economic or medical circumstances. As mentioned above, the resulting sorts were used as the basis for dividing our sample of young adults into two groups: active hunters and occasional hunters.

After each sort was finished, we spent some time talking to informants about how they made their decisions. These open-ended interviews were quite revealing as to the specific criteria that people used for their judgements. Several people mentioned that active hunters were the ones who were always buying lots of gas to go on long trips. Unlike other hunters who occasionally bought 1–2 jerry cans of gas for short day or overnight trips, active hunters often bought 5–10 jerry cans of gas for serious hunting expeditions. Another informant mentioned that active hunters were always working on their

TABLE 2. Demographic and economic information on sample households, Holman, N.W.T., 1992–1993.

Variables	Active hunting households	Occasional hunting households	Total
Number in sample	10	10	20
Av. age	31.1	26.4	28.8
Av. household size	4.4	4.1	4.25
Av. no. of children	2.3	2.1	2.2
Av. household debt	$1516	$1444	$1480
Av. estimated income	$30 000	$28 300	$29 150
Income range ($1000s)	$57–6 K	$52–12 K	$57–6 K
Number with bank account	1	2	3
Number with credit card	1	0	1
Number receiving social assistance in past year	4	5	9

machines (snowmobiles) to keep them running well. Less active hunters, if they worked on their machines at all, often did so only during the warm spring months. Other comments included: 1) active hunters are always sharing meat with other people, 2) active hunters are always ready to go out hunting at a moment's notice, 3) active hunters travel at any time of year and not just during the spring, and 4) active hunters know more about travelling in cold weather and on the sea ice.

While we did not do a card sort with older hunters, we spent a fair amount of time talking with them about young people's hunting activities. Some of these older hunters were highly critical of younger people because of their lack of knowledge and lack of motivation to hunt or fish. They were quite aware that many young people did not hunt at all and that many who did simply made short day trips, often close to town, which the older hunters did not consider to be serious hunting. While visiting with two of these elders, the senior author learned about a hunting trip made by some young people:

> While I was visiting with G.A. and W.K., W. told me (RC) that some of the boys and young men who were camping up at Fish Lake had decided to go caribou hunting. W. said that they went with only one gun between the four of them, two sleds, one jerry can, but no camping equipment. They went almost to Tahiryuak (about 60 miles) before turning back. One of the young hunters later reported that they had barely made it back to their camp at Fish Lake before running out of gas. G. and W. both laughed saying that it was "tamaryak" (crazy). When they finished laughing, I said that it was almost as crazy as "Qablunaqs" (Whites). G. looked at me, shook his head, and said, "Qablunaqs aren't that crazy alright."
>
> (October 24, 1992, Hunting and Sharing Journal)

While elders realize that there are a number of young men who are active in hunting and who hunt and fish in a serious manner, their most critical comments are reserved for the young people who do nothing at all:

> **RC**: So how come younger people here in town aren't doing much hunting these days?
>
> **G.A.**: That's a real good question (pause). I understand two things. Lots of good things I know, eh? I know lots of things, but two things are really important to me. Government and TV. Government gives them free food every month. That's a big spoiler right there. That a big problem—welfare, eh? If you get married, if you get a wife, government starts giving you money right away. It's not good. It's not right. That's why them guys don't like to hunt anymore. They got free money, easy money, from the government. Right there! Big spoiler for the younger people. That's why younger people don't care for hunting anymore. They know they're going to get the money from the government anyway. They don't care about trying to get something. If they get the money, they're going to get the food. They know that. Government should never do that in the first place. They could do that a little bit, but not too much you know. Just a couple and a boy, they get together, maybe the government gives them one thousand a month. It's not good.
>
> **(Pause)** After that, they get lots of food from the government. They go home, eat, lay on the couch, watch TV. I understand those things right there. That's why they get lazy. They don't care what to do.
>
> **(Pause)** Some of them never seen animals, never seen caribou. (G.A. Interview, November 3, 1992).

There is no doubt in the minds of our informants and the elder hunters we interviewed that the younger generation is considerably less involved in hunting and fishing than the older generation of Holman residents currently in their 40s and 50s. Nevertheless, it is simplistic to dismiss all young people as uninterested or uninvolved in hunting, trapping, and fishing. Indeed, it is essential to consider the social, economic, and demographic factors which have altered contemporary patterns of "making a living" in the North.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND TO HOLMAN HARVESTING

Holman is located on the western coast of Victoria Island (Fig. 1) approximately 300 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The nearest neighboring communities are Sachs Harbour, Coppermine, and Cambridge Bay. These communities are distant enough from Holman so that travel to them is, with rare exception, limited to air travel. Holman's 400 residents are thus relatively isolated from adjacent groups, and subsistence efforts rarely intrude onto lands utilized by these neighboring communities.

Holman Inuit are largely descended from the northernmost groups of Copper Inuit: the Kangiryuarmiut of Prince Albert Sound and the Kangiryuatjagmiut of Minto Inlet. In the 1930s and 1940s, a number of Western Inuit (now called Inuvialuit) from the Mackenzie Delta region moved into the Holman area for the purposes of either trapping or securing employment with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) or the Roman Catholic mission. In the early 1960s, the closing of the

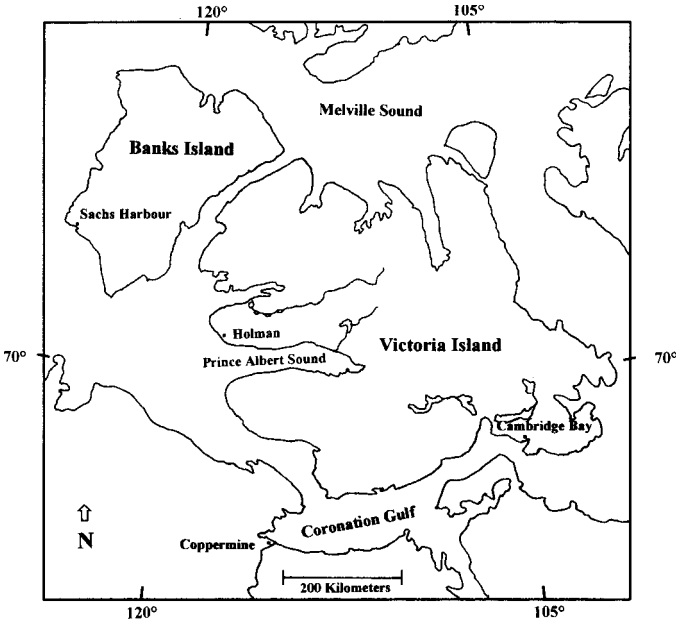

FIG. 1. Holman region in relation to the western Canadian Arctic.

Read Island HBC trading post on southern Victoria Island also resulted in an influx of several Puvilingmiut families.

Holman became the future locus for Western and Copper Inuit settlement in 1939 when the HBC moved its Fort Collinson trading post from Walker Bay, located north of Minto Inlet, to the mouth of Prince Albert Sound. A Roman Catholic mission was established there in the same year. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the regional population remained scattered in isolated hunting and trapping camps, coming to Holman several times a year for purposes of trading and socializing. Most Holman elders (now 60 and over) grew up and spent part of their early adulthoods in such camps, while many middle-aged adults (40–60) experienced at least a portion of their childhoods out on the land. For both groups, the experience of living off the land provided not only a valuable education but a high degree of self-discipline and self-reliance that would become increasingly difficult to instill in subsequent generations raised in the comfort of a village. Equally important was the fact that material needs were few and the costs of hunting and trapping relatively low. One active hunting elder commented that when he first got married, he felt like a "rich man." He had three rifles, nine dogs, a sled, and a jolly boat, and that was all he needed to support himself and his family.

In the early 1960s, the Canadian Government encouraged those Copper Inuit still living on the land to take up full-time residence in Holman by offering them government-subsidized housing shipped in by barge (Usher, 1965). By 1967, the last families moved to Holman from their trapping camps, many of which had been occupied for 10 to 20 years. For the Holman region, this effectively marked the end of the trapping camp era and the beginning of the settlement era.

Even though Holman Inuit were concentrated in a small but growing community, hunting, fishing, and trapping remained crucial economic activities, not only for fresh food but also for fox pelts and sealskins that could be sold or traded at the store. Most families spent 2–3 months in the late spring and early summer at fishing and sealing camps (a few families even longer). Fall was marked by net fishing through newly formed ice at Fish Lake, located 50 miles north of town. In winter, trapping was pursued by the majority of adult men along with the hunting of caribou and polar bear. As long as fox prices were high, men ran traplines from Holman that were 100–300 miles long (Morris Nigiyok, pers. comm. 1992). Early spring, on the other hand, was a family affair: after the tedium of a long and cold winter, entire families would leave town for days at a time to camp and fish for lake trout and arctic char through the still thick lake ice. In general, even though there was a slowly growing tide of wage employment and social assistance dependency as the settlement's infrastructure and population began to expand, subsistence hunting retained its primary focus as both an economic and social activity.

The introduction of snowmobiles in the early 1970s not only increased Holman Inuit dependence upon southern technology, but also profoundly altered hunting and trapping strategies (Father Henri Tardy, pers. comm. 1979). Previously, hunters were required to stay out of town for one to two weeks at a time checking their traplines or hunting caribou, but the greater mobility and speed offered by the snowmobile made relatively quick excursions to distant locations possible. Hunters were thus able to spend more time in town and less time on the land engaged in hunting, trapping, and fishing pursuits. Like subsidized housing, medical facilities, churches, schools, and government assistance, the snowmobile helped shift the focus of Inuit life from the land to the settlement simply by making subsistence pursuits easier and less time-consuming.

Most of the young adult males in our sample were raised as snowmobile hunters. A handful of our oldest informants in their 30s have fond memories of travelling with their fathers (and occasionally mothers) by dog sled, and a number even reported having small dogteams of their own (1–3 puppies tied to a little sled) when very young:

> I remember when I was younger, I used to travel with my Dad by dog sled. We used to spend a good deal of time in the spring down at Kaoraokut. My Dad used to have to cross cracks in the sea ice which he did by getting pieces of ice to use as a bridge. I really remember those days. Travelling by dogs was so peaceful. I also think that the climate was warmer because I never got cold. (F.N., September 20, 1992, Harvest Interview)

By and large, however, when these young people started to learn about hunting and travelling on the land, the snowmobile was the dominant form of winter transportation.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping continued to be important economic activities throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Increasing equipment costs and rising prices for gasoline and oil, however, made it necessary for many households to have at least one wage-earner, usually a wife but occasionally a son

or daughter, to generate cash which could be used to support hunting and fishing activities. Hunters themselves generated cash from fox trapping, seal hunting, carving, sports hunt guiding, and seasonal or part-time employment. This increasing dependence upon cash income heralded the demise of the "old-time" hunting and trapping households that once supported themselves almost exclusively from hunting and trapping.

Throughout this time period, fewer and fewer male household heads continued as active trappers, and even fewer young males decided to take up this form of mixed economic adaptation. Many male household heads took advantage of increasing wage employment opportunities, others started their own businesses, and a small number simply became dependent on social assistance. The crash in sealskin prices in 1983–1984 as a result of the European Economic Community's ban on the importation of sealskins was especially devastating, and hunters found that a significant source of cash income had vanished (see Wenzel, 1991). On the heels of this, a second blow descended on Holman harvesters as animal rights organizations began a new campaign against the use of leg-hold traps, resulting in a continuing decline in arctic fox pelt prices. This made the securing of income outside of the "traditional" hunting and trapping domain even more essential. Despite attacks on Inuit trapping and seal hunting, subsistence hunting and fishing exclusively for local consumption have remained important (Smith and Wright, 1989).

During the senior author's first research trip to Holman from 1978 to 1980, for example, there were approximately 16 male household heads who were active hunter/trappers compared to an equivalent number who were primarily wage earners (out of a total of 56 households). While the wage earners were fairly active in hunting and fishing, they were generally unable to invest the same amount of time in hunting activities as the hunter/trappers, and none of them maintained traplines. By the early 1990s, however, no male household head could be said to fall into the full-time hunter/trapper category using the same criteria applied during the first research visit.

Today, subsistence hunting and fishing continue as important economic and social activities. As one might expect of an increasingly large and complex community, there is great variation in subsistence involvement. Some individuals make a concerted effort to get out of town as often as they can and at any time of year, while others reveal no motivation to leave town except during the warmest days of summer. Overall, however, it is safe to say that older males (35 – 65) are still more active than younger males in subsistence involvement even though they themselves are not as active as they would have been 10–15 years ago. Data presented later in this paper will show that these older household heads are responsible for most of the food sharing that takes place within the extended family and the community as a whole.

Hunting strategies have changed as well. As "day trips" have become much more common for all age groups, most especially for younger hunters, greater emphasis has been placed upon speed of travel. Holman hunters take great pleasure in talking about how fast and how far they travelled in one trip, almost as though speed is as important as harvesting results. Having travelled with Inuit for over 15 years, the senior author can relate many incidents of being "left behind" by Inuit companions who became bored with anything less than high-velocity snowmobile travel:

> I prefer to travel on the land by myself, mostly because people drive too slow for me. I always want to grab the throttle and fly down the trail. People who drive slow waste their time getting to where they want to go, so I prefer to go by myself. Sometimes I'll go out with my Dad though because he drives really fast too.
>
> (T.O., December 10, 1992, Harvest Interview)

Hunting activities are also highly individualized, perhaps in keeping with the autonomous nature of Copper Inuit social organization (see Damas, 1969, 1975; Gardner, 1991: Fig. 4). While most individuals will hunt in groups of two or three, especially when travelling long distances, there is now an increasing number of hunters who prefer to travel alone, even on overnight trips. The widespread use of CB radios, powerful all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles, as well as the relative closeness to the community of terrestrial resources (especially muskoxen in recent years), makes this presently feasible.

Holman is located in an abundant wildlife area. Although the western Victoria Peary caribou population has experienced a decline in recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the muskox population in the same area. Holman Inuit are not happy with this situation, since caribou meat is greatly preferred over muskox meat, and many hunters suspect that the muskoxen have driven the caribou to other parts of Victoria Island. Other animals harvested include arctic char, ringed seals, ducks, geese, rabbits, and polar bear. The region lacks large marine mammals such as whales and walruses, which generally require highly organized work crews under the direction of a boat captain (umialiq) or camp boss (isumataq) for successful harvesting.

HUNTING INVOLVEMENT: THE SAMPLE PROFILE

There is, as might be expected, a great range of variation with respect to hunting/fishing involvement among young Holman householders. Included in our sample are individuals, all designated here as occasional harvesters, who rarely venture out on the land and even some who have never seen a live caribou, much less shot one. These contrast with individuals who are relatively active, harvesting as much as the pressures of work, family, and financial constaints allow. Only one person in our sample would qualify as a full-time hunter/trapper in the tradition of older men in their 40s through 60s. (In the card sorts, this was the only individual who was consistently listed with the older, more active hunters.) In his social interactions, this individual is more likely to be found among the older hunters than among men his own age

and quite frequently speaking Inuktitut rather than English.

The decision to become a full-time hunter was made by this individual at an early age since he "never wanted to be anything else." While this man works at various casual jobs and carves to make money, all of these activities are oriented towards generating cash to support his hunting activities. He is the only person in our sample who maintains a dog team and uses it for guiding sports hunters, an activity limited to the most active and knowledgeable of hunters. It is quite clear that this person takes a great deal of pride in being a knowledgeable and successful hunter who provides meat and fish to a fairly large number of kinsmen and fellow hunters. In a community where the status hierarchy is becoming quickly transferred to the domain of highly paid wage employment and sports involvement, most notably hockey, this is the only member of our sample who has opted to remain within the old status system.

The remainder of our sample is more difficult to classify and, in fact, to do so would mask the complex set of variables influencing a young adult's decision to be or not be involved in subsistence harvesting. Family histories, motivation, skill and knowledge levels, access to capital equipment, and availability of time are but a few factors influencing a young adult's level of subsistence involvement. These harvesters may be placed upon a continuum of subsistence involvement whereby certain individuals have obviously made a conscious choice and exert the effort to be active, others go out only occasionally, generally to supplement their store diets with country food, while still others almost never venture out on the land. Subsistence involvement may also vary considerably from year to year for a variety of social, economic, or health reasons. One of our fairly active hunters, for example, did not go out hunting as much during the research period as he had the previous year because he was busy most weekends building his new HAP (Home Assistance Program) house. Another young man who was listed as an active hunter on the card sorts rarely ventured out hunting or fishing during the research period since he had just recently secured a good, high-paying job as airport maintainer, a job which considerably limited his free time.

During our initial interviews, all informants expressed an interest in subsistence hunting and fishing as well as a recognition of its importance within the community, both for economic and ideological reasons. An occasional hunter was just as likely as an active hunter to mention the greater nutritional value of fresh "Eskimo foods" compared to freezer-burned and expensive "Qablunaq foods" from the local store. Even if a household head rarely ventures out to harvest his own fish and meat, there is the implicit recognition that subsistence hunting and the food sharing that results from it are important integrating mechanisms within the community. Table 3 provides a summary of individuals' statements on the importance of hunting and the value of land foods. These are representative of both active and occasional harvesters' perceptions.

When comparing active and occasional hunters with regard to amounts of hunting equipment owned, it is not surprising that the active hunters have invested far more heavily in hunting equipment and supplies (Table 4). They own more traps, more sleds, more fishing nets, more sleeping mats, and more camp lanterns than occasional hunters. Across all categories, they are better equipped for travelling at all times of year and for engaging in all types of subsistence activities. Many of the occasional hunters are adequately equipped to engage in limited subsistence hunting, but are certainly not able to participate in as wide a range of exploitative strategies as are utilized by the active hunters. Thus, while most of them have snowmobiles, sleds, tents, and sleeping bags, few have lanterns, which are used primarily in fall and winter. We found this surprising given the prolonged periods of darkness in mid-winter. Most occasional hunters, however, travel only in spring when there is 24-hour daylight or limit their travel in fall and winter to day trips. Even fewer in our total sample own fishing nets. Net fishing is generally viewed as a subsistence pursuit of older hunters, and as long as a young householder has older relatives who engage in net fishing and share the results, there is no perceived need to purchase a net.

Economic factors appear to figure quite heavily in hunting involvement. The most active hunters in our sample population are also those who have regular (and, in many cases, high-paying) jobs which provide enough income for the purchase of equipment and supplies. The least active are those on social assistance or who work at casual employment when available. In the end, it may be impossible to separate motivational factors from economic factors. The same high motivation that contributes to a young person's success at a high-paying job may also contribute to his desire to be a productive hunter. In short, there are, in the words of one Holman resident, "doers" and "no-doers."

TABLE 3. Interview comments, Holman, N.W.T., 1992–1993.

Reasons for hunting:

- I never wanted to be anything else but a hunter.
- It must be real boring spending all your time in town and having other people hunt for you. It's the best part of life!
- My parents are really beginning to slow down so I'm hunting more.
- I have to hunt because my in-laws really eat lots of land food.
- It's my way of life and it supplements my income. Also, I really enjoy hunting. The quality of the meat is better.
- To get to eat the food we grew up on. It gets me out for a while. It's important to get out and relax. No headaches. It's really peaceful out there.
- It's a part of my livelihood, and I need the fresh meat.
- Tradition, I guess. We need traditional food, and the kids gotta learn how we grew up. They like to go out too. It's good for them and me to be out there. It's the best kind of R and R there is. It gets cold sometimes, but you gotta do it.

Reasons for eating land food:

- Qablunaq food is more expensive.
- Qablunaq food is no good for drying, only for shaking and baking.
- Qablunaq food—it's just like you don't get as much out of it. I get more out of Eskimo food. I'm fuller after I eat it. Qablunaq food—well it's like Chinese food!
- Eskimo food is fresher than the frozen meats at the Bay. That stuff is usually old and freezer burned. It's brown and dark in color. Eskimo food tastes better and is more nutritious and we can save a lot of money.
- Qablunaq food has no blood. They drain all the blood out. I like the blood. It's tastier. Like those raw sardines? They taste like they're really dry. It's pretty hard to eat Qablunaq food. It gives me heartburn!

TABLE 4. Hunting equipment inventories of active vs. occasional hunting households, Holman, N.W.T., 1992–1993.

Equipment	Active hunting households (n = 10)	Occasional hunting households (n = 10)	Total
Snowmobiles	13	11	24
ATVs	12	7	19
Boats	6	4	10
Outboard motors	5	4	9
Sleds	22	10	32
Firearms	48	36	84
Traps	299	83	382
Camp stoves	26	14	40
Camp lanterns	11	3	14
Tents	22	11	33
Jigging sticks	44	39	83
Ice chisels	10	8	18
Gas augers	8	3	11
Fishing rods	18	14	32
Fishing nets	7	0	7
Open-water boats	4	2	6
Seal hooks	4	6	10
Sinking seal hooks	2	2	4
Sleeping bags	25	16	41
Snowknives	8	3	11
Caribou sleeping mats	31	23	54
Foam sleeping mats	29	20	49
Storage sheds	4	6	10
Gas cans	66	49	115
Cabins	6	2	8
Dogteams	1	0	1
Own home	1	2	3

As already mentioned, age is also an important variable. The active hunters are slightly older with an average age of 31.1 compared to the occasional hunters with an average age of 26.4. This difference may be just enough to account for different levels of knowledge regarding hunting, fishing, travelling, and survival on the land. The younger people appear more town-focused than land-focused and are still highly dependent upon parents and other older relatives to provide fresh meat and fish. A number of our older active hunting informants, however, mentioned that since their parents and in-laws were getting older and starting to "slow down," they were increasing their hunting involvement to help support them. We might predict a similar increase in hunting involvement on the part of some younger, currently less active, hunters as their own parents age. Indeed, a number of these younger informants expressed a desire to learn more about hunting, and a few of them have actually started to harvest more actively. One of our active hunters mentioned that his younger brother was starting to go out with him, expressing a desire to learn from his older brother what he had failed to learn from his father. This process of increasing involvement with hunting as one grows older has also been noted by Hensel (1992) in his research in Bethel, Alaska. He uses the expression "growing into subsistence" to refer to a process by which Yup'ik adults increase their hunting, fishing, and traditional food preparation activities as their parents die or grow increasingly infirm.

A number of wage earners in our sample (both active and occasional hunters) expressed the desire to engage in more hunting and fishing, but they cited the constraints of work which limit them to weekends and holidays, times when the weather may not necessarily cooperate. Our data files are filled with examples of wage earners who had arranged job leaves and vacations to go hunting but ended up being "stuck" in town because of poor weather. While the older generation of hunters clearly subordinates wage employment activities to hunting (so they can get up and leave whenever the conditions are right), the younger generation must accommodate their hunting/fishing activities to the demands of the workplace. As more and more young people obtain high-paying and highly responsible jobs within the community, they become increasingly constrained in their subsistence involvement. Even though they go out less often than members of the older generation, subsistence hunting/fishing is no less important to them economically and psychologically, and several of them are the primary land food providers for a large network of kinsmen. Ironically, many of these wage earners (especially those who work for the Hamlet) are among the best-equipped individuals in the entire community. Each year, instead of taking a paid vacation, Hamlet employees may receive a land allowance of up to $7,000. In many cases, this money is used to purchase a new snowmobile or ATV. Individuals on social assistance or employed at a low-paying job do not have access to this kind of windfall. Thus, while the well-employed are constrained by job commitments, the underemployed and welfare-dependent are constrained by lack of resources (see Wenzel, 1991:132–133 for an examination of this aspect of community economy dynamics).

While hunting knowledge is a critical variable in determining both hunting involvement and hunting success, an understanding of snowmobile maintenance and repair is also critical. Two more active sample hunters (both in their 30s) reported investing a great deal of time in preventive maintenance, often performing major overhauls on their machines in the fall before the first snows. This generally entails changing all bearings, rings, and other parts that may cause a breakdown on the land. Because of this, these two men rarely experience any problems while travelling, but when they do, they have the knowledge, the tools, and the extra parts to make repairs on the trail. These two men are in a highly advantageous position not only because they are trained mechanics and have access to the community garage to work on their equipment, but because they have good, high-paying jobs. One of them usually purchases a new machine each fall. He believes that he saves time, money, and aggravation by having a new machine, since snowmobiles experience increasingly frequent breakdowns as they age. When his new machine arrives, he does a major adjustment to the engine and the body. He then puts several thousand miles on it and sells it at the end of the season, just at the point "when things are ready to break down."

Not everyone in our sample has such extensive knowledge of snowmobile repair and maintenance as these two men, nor does everybody have access to the same resources. Preventive maintenance is the exception rather than the rule, and most snowmobile owners wait for their machines to break

down before repairing them. When this happens, those without high-paying jobs may be grounded for weeks or even months as they save money (or wait for a windfall) to buy a new part. If they are lucky, the part will be relatively inexpensive or, alternatively, they may be able to find a used part in an old machine somewhere in town. During our interviews, we were struck by the number of times people reported that they couldn't go out hunting because their machines were broken down or that they had no money to buy gas. For many informants, these were legitimate complaints, especially considering the high cost of gasoline and parts. For a small number of our informants, however, such complaints may simply have served as convenient excuses to hide inactivity.

Hunting involvement varies significantly across specific activities and seasons. The most popular subsistence activities, engaged in by even the least active, are also warm-weather pursuits. These include duck hunting in June, spring ice fishing, and rod and reel fishing in summer (see Fig. 2). While these activities generally require minimal investment in time and energy (and knowledge), they can nevertheless provide a substantial amount of fresh meat and fish to Inuit households. The least frequent activities include polar bear hunting, seal hunting, trapping, and rabbit hunting. With the exception of rabbit hunting, these are activities usually engaged in by only the most active, generally older hunters in the community. All require significant investments of time, money, and knowledge. Summer net fishing, which we failed to include in the self-report card sorts, is also an activity carried out almost exclusively by older hunters and rarely engaged in by younger household heads.

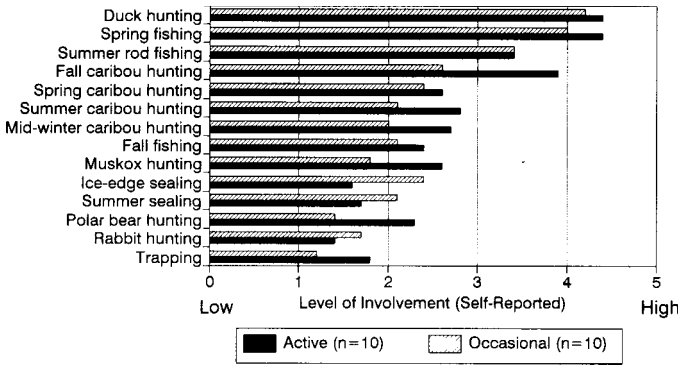

FIG. 2. Level of self-reported hunting involvement for active and occasional hunters by hunting activity, Holman, 1992–1993. (0 = low, 5 = high).

Interestingly, almost all of our informants reported that they felt very uneasy travelling on the sea ice. There is a clear recognition that sea ice travel, done primarily for polar bear and seal hunting, requires a level of knowledge which most younger hunters do not possess. Only two of our informants (both classified as active hunters) felt comfortable with sea ice travel. The rest reported that they felt comfortable travelling only on the land. In some respects the willingness and ability to travel over the sea ice in mid-winter for either polar bear or seal hunting is a diagnostic characteristic separating the truly knowledgeable older hunters (40 and over) from the less knowledgeable younger hunters.

As expected, hunting activities are significantly affected by light and temperature. While all the hunters in the community curtail hunting and trapping activities during the mid-winter dark period, this curtailment is most pronounced for the young, occasional hunters (see Fig. 3). With the arrival of warmer weather and 24 hours of light, these individuals start venturing out more frequently and farther afield for spring fishing and goose hunting. We were impressed by one of our occasional informants, who had spent the winter watching television, playing hockey, and collecting social assistance payments, when he suddenly left town in early June to go fishing and duck hunting. For three weeks, he and his family camped out on the land while they carried out a frenzied pace of hunting and fishing. During this time, we saw him in town only briefly as he came in to shower and resupply at the store. After three weeks, he and his family returned to town and resumed their normal, sedentary lifestyle.

When comparing the two groups in terms of harvest effort and harvest return, we see a significant difference. Table 5 provides recall information of hunting activities from October 1991 to August 1992. October was chosen as the starting date for these recall interviews since early October marks the beginning of the winter subsistence cycle. Our goal was to get information on the most recent winter hunting cycle as well as the summer hunting cycle that immediately preceded the researchers' entry into the field. These data were collected from all informants during initial baseline interviews. Table 6, however, displays the results of the biweekly interviews conducted during the entire research period. We believe that the latter data are much more accurate. Nevertheless, the overall results appear to be the same. The active hunters in our sample made more hunting trips, travelled farther, camped overnight more often, and harvested a greater number of animals. The figures on muskox harvesting in Table 6 are especially interesting. Given the recent increase in the muskox population on western Victoria Island, it is fairly easy to make a short trip out of town to harvest these animals. Thus, there is minimal investment of time, energy, and resources. Despite the minimal energy requirement, very few of our occasional hunting household heads actually bothered to hunt these animals. Active hunters harvested 35 muskoxen while occasional hunters (one particular individual in fact) harvested only two. The discrepancy can be explained by differing motivational levels and varying degrees of commitment to subsistence hunting as a means of putting food on the table.

There is agreement among all residents of Holman that caribou tastes better than muskox. Given a choice between the two kinds of meat, Holman residents will almost always pick caribou as the preferred meat, especially for drying and *quaq* (raw, frozen meat). With the recent decline in caribou herds (hence the discrepancy in the caribou harvest between Tables 5 and 6), many residents are reluctantly increasing their intake of muskox meat. Active hunters, who are more concerned about providing fresh land foods for their families and other relatives, have started hunting and eating muskoxen more frequently. As one active hunter noted: "we mustn't complain [about eating muskox meat]...at least it's meat!"

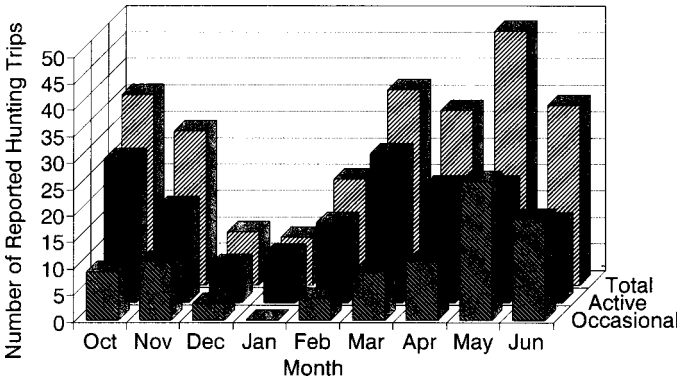

FIG. 3. Number of reported snowmobile hunting trips per month for active and occasional hunters, Holman, 1992–1993.

Occasional hunters have not accepted muskox meat as graciously. As long as muskox meat remains a less preferred food, they will continue to hunt caribou on an irregular basis (often unsuccessfully if Tables 5 and 6 are any indication), while accepting caribou meat through the community's food-sharing network. This clearly reflects a different level of commitment to subsistence hunting as an economic strategy. While some of the occasional hunters in our sample reported short trips close to town as "hunting" in their biweekly interviews, the active hunters in our sample did not consider these as serious expeditions:

> During his biweekly interview, I (PC) asked R. if he had done any hunting this past month. He reported that he hadn't done any. I countered that he had done some since he told me earlier that he had been out driving around looking for wolf tracks (a wolf had been seen in town lately). He also reported earlier that he went out with his rifle hunting rabbits but came home early when the weather started getting bad. R. said that those trips didn't count. I then asked R. if he thought that people who went out looking for rabbits and wolves close to town were really hunting. He crinkled his nose and said "what do you think?"
>
> (R.K., January 30, 1993, Harvest Interview)

Another factor influencing level of subsistence involvement is the degree to which men's wives are supportive of their subsistence efforts, both morally and financially. Women raised in more traditional households, who prefer land food to store-bought food and who have knowledge of butchering and skin processing, are much more likely to encourage their husbands to hunt and fish. If these women have cash income to invest in hunting equipment, the subsistence effectiveness of the entire household is raised. In other households, however, wives may not be as supportive of hunting or as willing to butcher animals. This most certainly affects the hunting motivational levels of husbands. Our sample of 18 households included both kinds of wives. For example, one young active hunter in our sample told us that when he decided to run a small trapline during the 1992–1993 season, his wife got mad at him and told him that she wasn't going to skin his foxes. Instead, he skinned some of them himself and took the others to his mother. Other women in our sample reported having no objections to skinning seals or foxes. Clearly, just as young men vary considerably in terms of hunting, fishing, and survival knowledge, so also their wives vary greatly in terms of their knowledge of animal butchering, skin preparation, and traditional sewing.

TABLE 5. Hunting activities for the period October 1991–August 1992 based on initial recall interviews, Holman, N.W.T., 1992–1993.

	Active hunting households (10)	Occasional hunting households (10)	Total
Caribou hunting trips	74	36	110
Overnights hunting caribou	75	26	101
Caribou harvested	158	30	188
Farthest average round trip (km)	418	232	334
Muskox hunting trips	21	13	34
Overnights	2	0	2
Muskox harvested	17	7	24
Farthest average round trip (km)	192	45	133
Informants engaged in polar bear hunt	4	2	6
Polar bear hunting trips	5	2	7
Overnights	6	0	6
Polar bear harvested	4	0	4
Informants who went to Fish Lake	4	2	6
Overnights at Fish Lake	26	6	32
Informants engaged in spring fishing	10	10	20
Spring fishing trips	53	40	93
Overnights	37	15	52
Informants engaged in net fishing	7	2	9
Informants engaged in seal hunting	5	5	10
Seals harvested	117	36	153
Ducks harvested	625	200	825
Informants engaged in trapping	2	0	2
Foxes trapped	30	0	30
Farthest av. dist. (km rt) by snowmobile	480	182	326
Farthest av. dist. (km rt) by ATV	158	70	134
Total number of overnights	164	52	216

TABLE 6. Hunting effort of sample population based on biweekly interviews, Holman, N.W.T., August 1992–July 1993.

	Active hunters (n = 8)	Occasional hunters (n = 8)	Total (n = 16)
Hunting trips	199	137	336
Snowmobile trips	153	89	242
Honda trips	40	36	76
Boat trips	10	9	19
Overnights	145	59	204
Average total kilometres	2515	1035	1774
Caribou harvested	45	19	64
Muskox harvested	35	2	37
Polar bear harvested	1	0	1
Seals harvested	37	17	54
Fish harvested	1136	459	1595
Ducks/geese harvested	268	146	414
Rabbits harvested	6	2	8
Foxes harvested	139	9	148
Average longest trip (km)	429	133	278

It is possible that the research may have biased the amount of harvesting conducted by sample members. While unintended influence, as in any fieldwork situation, undoubtedly occurred, we nevertheless are convinced that such influence, if it existed at all, would have been exerted on both the active and occasional hunters in the sample. In addition, we believe quite firmly that such an influence might be enough to encourage a young hunter to go out a few extra times in the fall and spring, but not enough to make him go out on a three-day caribou hunting trip in mid-winter just to impress two Qablunaq researchers. Last, as far as exaggerating hunting involvement is concerned, our constant monitoring of hunters' comings and goings, our cross-checking with other informants, and our interviews with elder hunters gave us a fairly reliable picture of the true hunting, fishing, and trapping involvement of the members of our sample, as well as of many young people not included in our sample.

FOOD PREFERENCE AND SHARING

> When entering F.'s house, I (PC) found him watching TV with his kids who were coloring at the coffee table. They were watching the Netsilik series film on fishing at the stone weir. F. said that those people were really catching lots of fish and that they were probably going to put them into stone caches to let them rot a little before eating them. He then turned to his kids and said, "those kids are really tough people because they never eat candy or pop and they always work hard and eat only caribou and fish which is better for you" The children hardly seemed to notice their father's lecture.
>
> (F.N., November 11, 1992, Harvest Interview)

Although there was great variation in terms of subsistence involvement, just about all households surveyed emphasized the importance of land food for taste, nutrition, and cost. Considering the very high cost and variable quality of all foods at the local store, especially the meat and fish (all of which is frozen or canned), the economic value of land food is indisputable.

Despite numerous methodological problems associated with the documentation of food sharing, our research indicates that food sharing continues to be an extremely important dimension of subsistence in Holman for economic, community integrative, and ideological reasons. Even as subsistence hunting appears to be somewhat diminished on the part of the younger generation, the sharing of food between households, both related and unrelated, remains strong. Food sharing is difficult to document precisely since it can take a number of forms, the most obvious of which is an outright gift of meat to another household and the least obvious of which is feeding someone in your own home. What most interested us was determining the complex web of social relations which united our sample households with other households in the community, irrespective of the precise amounts of food being given and received (see Wenzel, 1991:102).

Tracking the distribution of meat and fish throughout the community was a challenging task. Although it would have been preferable to conduct weekly interviews rather than biweekly interviews to assess interhousehold food-sharing activities, we decided early in the research that weekly interviewing would be far too intrusive and much too demanding for both researchers and informants. While tracking food sharing for most of our occasional harvesting households was relatively easy, it proved problematic for our most active hunting households. Indeed, several of our informants good-naturedly complained that they thought our questions stupid. Typical was one man's statement, "I have no idea how much meat I share. My wife gives it away and people just come and help themselves. My father-in-law helps himself and gives away meat to other people." In the end, our goal was not necessarily to perform a quantitative caloric or edible weight input-output analysis, but to obtain a sound qualitative understanding of the social and emotional dynamics of food sharing between individuals and among households within the community. We were also interested in making rough comparisons between the active hunting and occasional hunting households. The figures upon which these comparisons are based should thus be interpreted with caution and should not be used to compare Holman with other communities, where data collection procedures may have been quite different.

Sharing of meat and fish is ubiquitous in Holman, as it is in most northern communities. It is unheard of for a hunter to hoard food for just his immediate household. Rather, meat is distributed to relatives, friends, and unrelated elders. The decision to distribute meat depends upon a number of factors such as: 1) the amount of meat that has already been harvested and distributed within the community, 2) the amount of meat and fish that the distributor has received from other households, 3) the number of relatives the distributor has, 4) the prospective future harvest potential of the distributor (i.e., whether he expects to go out and get more), and 5) the level of generosity of the hunter. The actual distribution takes a multitude of forms. There is immediate distribution, whereby the hunter, or a family member, will carry meat or fish to give to other households. It is also common for neighbors and close relatives to visit a hunter's house to watch or even help with the butchering of the animal. In these situations, individuals may simply help themselves. If close relatives, they will simply take without asking. More distant relatives or friends will usually wait until they are invited to take whatever they want. With the storage of the remaining meat either in the house or in the community freezer, distribution may continue by inviting people over for meals or simply telling people to help themselves to meat or fish any time they want it. Frequently, older, active hunters who store meat in the walk-in freezer may have no idea how much meat they have at any one time, since an important aspect of sharing is allowing sons, daughters, grandchildren, and certain in-laws living in other households to help themselves whenever they desire land food. For this reason, an active hunter and his wife may have no idea how much meat they have shared in a given period.

Secondary and tertiary food distribution takes place as well. An elder who gets meat from a son or daughter may give it to another elder who may either give it to a relative outright or prepare a meal shared with others. One of our occasional hunters very rarely received land food directly into his own home. Nevertheless, his intake of fresh caribou, fish, and muskox was quite high, since he and his wife ate most meals at his mother-in-law's house.

Generally, younger households appear to be heavily dependent upon older households for land foods. This is primarily because the most productive hunters in the community are in their 40s and 50s. These individuals not only support their own residential units, but also provide substantial amounts of fresh meat and fish to married children, nephews, and nieces. In most cases, an active, elder hunter will maintain a space in the community walk-in freezer which married offspring may have access to, often without informing parents what has been taken. To some extent, the more active a hunter is and the larger his extended family, the less likely he is to know what is happening to the meat and fish he has caught or how much he has left in the walk-in freezer.

The form of sharing most common in the community is clearly a form of generalized reciprocity between relatives and friends. Between more socially distant individuals, food sharing may take on the dimension of balanced reciprocity when some object or service is exchanged for food products. Our surveys, however, show that this form of food sharing is rare and not as highly valued. One night, we had two of our informants visiting us for coffee and tea. One was an active hunter who had been unable to go out most of the winter because of snowmobile problems. While the four of us were together, he asked no one in particular if anybody in town had caribou meat to sell since he "was really getting low." Our other informant responded that he wasn't sure, but the next day he dropped off some caribou meat at the requester's house at no charge.

Table 7 shows the degree to which our informants were involved in food-sharing activities, both as givers and receivers. The data provide an interesting comparison between our two groups. Not only do the active hunters in our sample give away more food, but they also receive more food from others, suggesting that they are more actively involved overall in the food-sharing network. The fact that they may receive more food may be a function of a number of factors such as age, family size, food preference, and a subtle dynamic that one has to give in order to receive, or give at least nominally in order to be included in the system.

Active hunting households share not only with the households of occasional harvesters, but also with one another. To some extent, food exchanges between active hunting households are more likely to appear as a form of balanced reciprocity, but they are also a critical component of community integration as well as friendship and respect between hunting households. On the other hand, food exchanges between active and less active households are more likely to appear as generalized reciprocity, usually occurring because of an obligation that a hunter feels towards younger relatives (usually sons, daughters, younger siblings) or elders who can no longer hunt for themselves. In both cases, community integration is enhanced substantially.

TABLE 7. Food sharing patterns in Holman, N.W.T., August 1992–July 1993.[1]

	Active hunters (n = 8)	Occasional hunters (n = 8)
Two-week periods land food given away	77	28
Fish given away[2]	285	105
Transactions given away[3]	258	80
Two-week periods land food received	108	87
Fish received	217	132
Transactions received	190	160

[1] Data compiled from biweekly harvest reports.

[2] Fish is the only item listed separately since it is the most common "whole" food item exchanged between households.

[3] A transaction refers to any transfer of land food between households regardless of amount. Thus, a bag of five caribou ribs was counted as a single transaction as was half a caribou.

In spite of the obvious increase in dependence upon store-bought food, land foods are still highly valued for their taste, freshness, substance, and economy. While people depend heavily upon store-bought food, many report that it is not as satisfactory since it "has no blood" and therefore "makes you hungry right away."

There is a slight difference between the active hunters and occasional hunters in the amount of land food consumed. During our biweekly interviews, we asked informants what they had for the evening's meal as well as what they had eaten the night before. While this should not be interpreted as an actual measure of land food dependence, it does function as a proxy for the relative amounts of land food consumed by our sample, at least for the evening meal. The results (see Table 8) indicate that land food is more likely to be a component of the dinners of the active hunters (60%) than of the occasional hunters (41%). Nevertheless, the average for both groups is 50%, suggesting that land food is as important as people say it is. These figures are additionally supported by self reports of food consumption which we collected early in the research. Figure 4 displays the number of informants (both husbands and wives) who reported consumption of different land foods at least four times per week, broken down by season of the year. While it is clear that certain food items are favored over others and that there is a significant seasonal component to land food consumption, most of our informants indicate a heavy reliance upon harvested foods.

While all households benefit from the distribution of land foods, not all benefit equally. Our sample includes households that received a phenomenal amount of meat and fish, but it also includes households that received comparatively little. Here, the two critical factors appear to be the number of relatives household members have who are active hunters and the emotional and physical closeness to those hunting relatives. Table 9 qualitatively details the country food received by one of our sample households during the 11-month

TABLE 8. Land food consumption, Holman, N.W.T., August 1992–July 1993.[1]

	Active hunters (n = 8)	Occasional hunters (n = 8)	Total (n = 16)
Evening meals with land food (all types)/total meals	165/276 (60%)	106/257 (41%)	271/533 (51%)
Caribou	68/165 (41%)	53/106 (50%)	121/271 (45%)
Muskox	43/165 (26%)	13/106 (12%)	56/271 (21%)
Seal	6/165 (4%)	1/106 (0.94%)	7/271 (3%)
Ducks/geese	23/165 (14%)	14/106 (13%)	37/271 (14%)
Fish	31/165 (19%)	26/106 (25%)	57/271 (21%)
Rabbit	1/165 (0.6%)	1/106 (0.94%)	2/271 (0.74%)
Polar Bear	0/165 (0%)	1/106 (0.94%)	1/271 (0.37%)

[1] Data extracted from biweekly harvest interviews. Based on the question: "What did you eat last night for dinner and where?"

research period, illustrating how important sharing can be. Peter and Julia (pseudonyms) have been married for eight years and have three children. Their fathers are among the most active hunters in the entire community who share widely with a large network of kinsmen. As a result, Peter and Julia are constantly receiving land food from both sets of parents. In addition, they live right next door to one set of parents, which makes it even easier for food to be exchanged. Peter and Julia are also frequently invited over for meals that are prepared next door. Their access to and consumption of land food is quite impressive. Interestingly, in spite of this ready access to land food, Peter made frequent hunting and trapping trips during the research period, ultimately sharing the food with his parents and in-laws. We believe that his motivation to hunt was more than just economic. Other households in our sample received substantially less land food than Peter and Julia. The important thing to emphasize, however, is that they did receive something, suggesting that even economically marginal households benefit from community-wide sharing.

INUIT IDENTITY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF SUBSISTENCE

By ideology of subsistence, we refer to the manner in which Holman Inuit themselves speak of and justify the importance of subsistence harvesting. Regardless of their involvement, most of our informants mentioned the domestic economic importance (or cash equivalent value) of hunting, whether receiving meat or giving meat. But they also mentioned other factors, including rest and relaxation, the

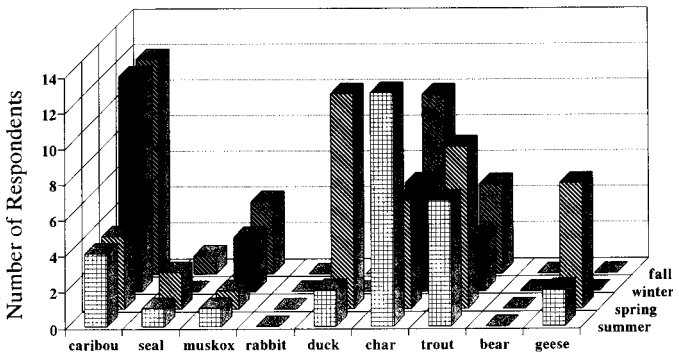

FIG. 4. Most frequently consumed foods by season. Number of respondents (n = 32) in sample households reporting consumption at least four times per week.

continuation of traditional Inuit hunting activities, and the importance of reestablishing ties with the land—even if it is only in the spring and summer. These data also speak to the importance of subsistence as a social integrator. While the harvesting and travel information presented above makes clear the strong material importance of land-oriented activities for both the active and occasional members of the sample, it is the qualitative statements of participants that suggest the depth of social articulation between hunting and community. As Stairs and Wenzel (1992) note, it is generosity that forms the cultural basis of subsistence.

Even as young people become increasingly divorced from subsistence harvesting and spend more time in the community rather than on the land, the ideology of subsistence becomes an important integrating mechanism within the community, providing social continuity with the past and a vital sense of self-worth to those struggling with a new identity in a changing northern world (see also Freeman, 1986, 1988). There is not a single informant we talked to, even among the younger, less active hunters, who did not speak nostalgically of past experiences hunting and trapping with fathers or camping most of the summer with their families. For many of these young people, there is clearly a sense that they have become increasingly divorced from a primary source of cultural identity. Perhaps, for this reason, the limited number of hunting and fishing trips that young people do make during the year has an even greater psychological significance for them.

To be a serious hunter is to be secure in one's Inuit heritage. Even if a young man goes out infrequently, he knows that he has the option of going out whenever and as often as he wants. There were times when some of our young informants appeared to be paying lip service to the importance of hunting in their lives or exaggerating their knowledge of hunting and cold weather survival. Nevertheless, when young people are unsure of their own sense of identity, it's difficult to determine whether the lip service is directed to the researchers or to the individual himself. Perhaps the most telling statement came from a nonhunter in our sample who was dependent almost entirely upon social assistance. At a drinking party, the issue of hunting came up and specifically the collapse of the fur market. This young man interrupted and said:

TABLE 9. Meat and fish received and given by a single household over 11-month period, 1992–1993.

Received from husband's parents	Received from wife's parents
caribou foreleg	1 char
caribou shoulder	1/2 caribou rump
1 char	1 bag of mipku (dried caribou)
side of caribou ribs	1 red belly char
2 char	1/2 rump caribou
2.6 kg of muskox meat	shoulder of caribou
1/4 muskox rib cage	front leg of caribou
back leg of muskox	1/2 rump of caribou
front end of caribou	back leg of caribou
1.1 kg caribou meat	0.75 kg of mipku
2 char	caribou leg and shoulder
1/2 rump of caribou	caribou breastbone
1 char	caribou leg and shoulder
	1 goose
Given away to others	5 char
	1/2 rump of caribou
4 muskox ribs	caribou leg and shoulder
2 geese	2 char
3.7–4.5 kg ground muskox meat	1/2 side of caribou ribs
muskox shoulder and foreleg	1/2 backbone of caribou
0.75 kg ground muskox	3 char
1/2 side of muskox ribs	1/2 rump with leg of caribou
0.75 kg ground muskox meat	1 whole young caribou -1kg.
1 char	2 char
1 char	
1 char	**Received from others**
1 char	
	2 char
	1/2 side of caribou ribs

> Greenpeace has really ruined our native way of life, man. They really ruined our traditional way, the way we used to be. It's our way of life and how we used to be. OK, I'm out of the talk now. I'll be quiet. I don't hunt. I don't do anything. (Peter Collings, Holman Fieldnotes, September 26, 1992)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper we have developed a picture of young adults' attitudes about and involvement in subsistence relations as embodied in the harvesting of wildlife and the sharing of country foods. We have emphasized not only the economic significance of hunting (see, for instance, Burch, 1985; Wenzel, 1986, 1991; Smith and Wright, 1989; Smith 1991) but the social and psychological significance of harvesting and food sharing as well. Researchers and government administrators who seek to understand the importance of subsistence harvesting from solely an economic viewpoint fail to appreciate the concept of subsistence from the Inuit perspective, a perspective that is much more complex and less easily studied.

Young people in Holman are quite aware of the constant attacks made upon Inuit hunting and trapping activities by animal rights organizations. While these attacks do not necessarily threaten their livelihoods as much as they threaten the livelihoods of the older generation of more active hunters, they are nonetheless viewed as an attack upon Inuit culture as a whole. Subsistence harvesting and Inuit culture, even from the perspective of occasional hunters, are viewed as intimately intertwined. For this reason, subsistence should be understood not from the perspective of formal economic models using only benefit-cost comparisons to justify (or delegitimize, as in Donaldson, 1988) subsistence harvesting, but from the perspective of what hunting and sharing mean to the people who do them.

The definition of the term "subsistence" is a case in point. Holman Inuit use the term subsistence in everyday conversation, but they are less likely to engage in the hairsplitting that is characteristic of subsistence researchers, government administrators, and wildlife regulators, all of whom often distinguish between hunting for domestic consumption (thus subsistence) and harvesting that ultimately involves selling animal products for cash (therefore commodity production). While this may at times be a useful conceptual distinction, we documented many cases in which hunters were involved simultaneously in both activities. A case in point involved a man who returned to Holman with a muskox. He gave part of the meat away to friends and relatives, kept part of the meat for himself, sold the rump to the co-op for cash, kept the horns to make a carving which would be sold locally, and traded the skull for a case of beer from a transient construction worker. This kind of resource utilization is typical of small northern communities and clearly complicates the concept of subsistence as it is generally used by scientists, economists, and administrators. Here we have chosen to analyze the concept of subsistence in a more pragmatic fashion: essentially as a way to make a living in the Arctic given the limited cash resources and employment opportunities that characterize most modern northern settlements.

Much subsistence research or, more fairly, the misapplication of subsistence research findings by some wildlife managers, conservationists and animal protectionists, assumes that Native harvesting must always be economically efficient and primarily oriented towards putting food on the table to qualify as a true subsistence activity. The definition of sports hunting, on the other hand, is that it must be uneconomic and pursued as a recreation (Usher, 1981), not out of necessity. As Huntington (1992:18–19; see also Trench, 1967) has pointed out, the perception of hunting as elitist has deep historical roots. Further, the consumptive use of wildlife, whether for sport or economic necessity, notions of common property notwithstanding (see Geist, 1988), retains this connotation today. What has changed is that this perception, under various rationales, has been extended to Native people's subsistence relations (see Best, 1985 and Livingston, 1981 as extreme examples of this view; but also Kelsall, 1968 and MacPherson, 1981).

While the distinction between subsistence hunting and hunting for sport may have some legitimacy in our own society, it is not a distinction made by Inuit. Using the Western conceptualization of sports hunting versus subsistence hunting, any hunting activity which is economically irrational cannot be justified as subsistence harvesting. If we define subsistence harvesting solely in terms of economic efficiency, especially as a necessarily monetized benefit-cost relationship, it will never be possible to justify Inuit subsist-

ence in the Western sense. In addition, the very fact that cash is being generated through the sale of harvest by-products (sealskins, narwhal ivory, muskox wool), would be viewed by some critics as negating the value of these species to the Inuit food economy.

Our files are full of cases where young hunters went out on long trips often knowing that their chances of success were low. Other hunters spent the winter trapping with limited success primarily because they wanted to get out of town. This is not to say that all hunting is inefficient. Indeed, we have other examples of highly efficient hunting expeditions, most often organized by older, more active hunters and a few of our more active informants. Other factors must be injected into the equation, and these are not always easily tallied with debits on the left and credits on the right.

While our research shows that young Inuit have a different level of involvement in subsistence hunting than older hunters, many of them are still involved as much as time, money, circumstance, and knowledge allow. Some of them are even increasing their involvement as they mature and their parents become infirm. Since economic and political circumstances have changed so dramatically in contemporary northern society, it is perhaps unfair to judge these young hunters, both active and occasional, by the standards of their parents and grandparents who came of age under remarkably different circumstances, when hunting and trapping were not only lucrative but the only viable economic options available to them. On the surface, subsistence hunting will never appear to be as important to young Inuit as it was for members of this older generation. The real issue is not how often young people go out, but whether they go out at all and what it means to them and their community when they do go out hunting. We believe that subsistence hunting continues to be an economically viable activity, but any examination of the importance of subsistence hunting should also consider socially beneficial factors related to Inuit identity, mental health, and self-esteem. As one of our informants who decided to start trapping again said:

> I haven't been trapping since 1979 and I really miss it. I used to run a trapline with my Dad down Prince Albert Sound. I was always impressed with how my Dad always knew where the traps were even though it might be dark out. Sometimes, I would get disoriented but my Dad would not. This year, I'm trapping because I really want to do it. I'm going to skin my own foxes. I'm not going to give them to my Mom. I've decided that this is something that I want to do myself.
>
> (P.K.,13 November 1992, Biweekly Interview)

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