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Chapter 6

Gendered Spaces, Public Places: Public and Private Revisited on the North Slope of Alaska

Barbara Bodenhorn

This chapter examines critically the public/private model of gendered space with the help of information given to me by Iñupiat (Eskimos) on the North Slope of Alaska.¹ It questions theoretical assumptions which implicitly equate a sexual division of labour with a gendered division of space, and at the same time, challenges Inuit ethnography which assumes the Inuit world is fundamentally divided into male and female categories.

Hunter-gatherer material has frequently served as a reference point for theoretical discussions concerning the position of women in society, particularly in the feminist/anthropological search for the origins of women's inequality. The model which assigns men to 'public' and women to 'private' spheres in social organisation, was most explicitly suggested by Michelle Rosaldo (1974). Its longest genealogical root, however, is Engels' (1972 [1896]) evolu-

1. Iñupiat is the name of the Inuit who live on the north and northwest coasts of Alaska. The word literally means 'real people'; the singular as well as the adjectival form is Iñupiaq. By Inuit, I refer to all of the circumpolar peoples collectively known as 'Eskimo'; with the Iñupiat, this includes, then, the Yup'ik peoples of southwestern Alaska, the Siberian Yup'it of Saint Lawrence Island, the Kalaallimut of Greenland, and so on. Fieldwork material upon which this chapter is based was collected between 1984 and 1986 with the support of the Alaska Humanities Forum, the Iñupiaq History, Language and Culture Commission, the Audrey Richards Fund, the Smuts Fund, Wolfson College and a Chadwick studentship. It also uses information told to me while I was working for the Iñupiaq Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) from 1980 to 1983. The chapter itself expands one of several points made in a paper comparing Iñupiaq and anthropological models of gender delivered at the 1989 Inuit Studies Conference in Fairbanks, Alaska. I would like to thank Barbara Bender, Susan Benson, Nurit Bird-David, Ernest S. Burch, Jr, and Frances Pine for comments on earlier versions.

tionist argument, put forward in the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Social life, according to Engels, began with the 'communistic common household' (ibid.: 474) which endured in the 'East' until the domestication of animals and in the 'West' with plant cultivation (ibid.: 463). During this stage, Engels posited a separate-but-equal division of labour in which men ('roving savages', ibid.: 479) went out to chase animals and women exercised 'supremacy in the house' (ibid.: 484). Because there was no private property, there was no private sphere; all labour was social. Domesticated herds were the first form of private property, given over to men to control because they were already associated with animals and 'procuring food'. This then generated the public/political sphere. Woman's productive labour lost out to her purely reproductive role. Her labour became invisible within the house, the domestic/female sphere which was subsumed and dominated by the public/male arena in which social production was controlled (ibid.: 486-89). Rosaldo argues that gendered oppression developed prior to private property. Although she claims to reject biological determinism, she feels that the universal subordination of women in relation to men stems from cultural constructions of the experience of motherhood which connects the former to the domestic sphere (1974: 23-4).² Relative equality, she feels, occurs when the productive/reproductive boundaries are blurred, i.e. when women gather more than men hunt and men are incorporated into the child-rearing process. Both Engels and Rosaldo assert that if public/private spheres are clearly demarcated, they will be gendered. At a more basic level, they assume that a clear sexual division of labour entails differential use of space by men and women and consequently a gendering of those spaces.³ Debate continues as to whether or not the systematic exploitation of women occurs in the absence of private property, just as it continues to ponder the relationship between mothering and gathering. The basic assumptions concerning space have remained.

2. Challenges to this model have pointed out that women occupy multiple roles: wife, sister, mother, etc. (Sacks 1979); that women's productive role may be emphasised over her reproductive capabilities (Collier 1988); and that relative gendered status may change during the life cycle (e.g., Joseph 1974; Silverman 1975). These question monolithic models of 'womanhood', but implicitly accept the idea of gendered space: where domestic space exists, it will be gendered as female space. Weiner (1976) accords Trobriand women an institutionalised moral, as opposed to political, niche in the public sphere.

3. Rosaldo's use of 'domestic' and 'extra-domestic' is an indication of her implicitly spatial model. Engels' article is also replete with references to space without a clear statement to that effect. Thus his 'savage' men 'roam from camp to camp' (p. 479) while the women reign supreme in the house (see above).

Generally speaking, the public/private model is presented as one based on social organisation.⁴ Both Rosaldo and Engels talk about what men and women do. I find the analysis of material conditions crucial to most social inquiry. Nevertheless, I agree with Moore (1988) that such an approach is weakened if it ignores the cultural construction of human action. Indeed, Godelier (1980) argues as a Marxist that to understand relations of production, systems of thought must be considered as part of the infrastructure as well as the superstructure. Women work hard in many societies; only when they are *seen* to work hard does this transform labour into 'social production'. I shall argue that for Iñupiat at least, the public sphere is defined by an ideology that incorporates women in two very important ways. First, knowledge is not gendered and is defined as a communal resource ('You must tell what you know; that's one of the rules'). Secondly, there is a shared, explicit (and therefore public) ideology that men and women need each other in order to maintain proper relations with the animals on which humans depend. This is marked by marital relations in what I shall call the kinship – or private – sphere and by male/female interdependence in the communal – or public – sphere.⁵ Both Engels and Rosaldo suggest that relatively egalitarian relations exist when the borders between private and public are blurred, or non-existent. I shall argue that in this particular case at least, egalitarian relations occur within these spheres which not only exist, but are culturally elaborated. Despite a clearly defined gendered division of labour in relation to hunting, their borders are marked, however, not by gender, but by animals, a distinction that is ritualised throughout the year in 'physical' as well as 'mental' space.

Anthropological models of Inuit social organisation have long assumed male-domination (e.g. Friedl 1974). This is being steadily challenged (Briggs 1974; Fienup-Riordan 1986; Guemple 1986; Guérin 1982); however, the gendering of Inuit space – which has been quite forcefully argued by Saladin D'Anglure (most recently 1986) – has yet to be examined as critically.⁶

4. I am, therefore, not addressing the other dominant model of this era, namely that identifying 'nature' with women and 'culture' with men.

5. I consciously use the term 'kinship' rather than 'domestic' since this sphere extends far beyond the household level on the North Slope. The assertion that a hunting society such as the Iñupiat can be divided into 'kinship' and 'communal' spheres, the latter not defined by kinship, is by no means a given. Establishing the basis of this assertion is the first task of the chapter.

6. Fienup-Riordan (1990), working with Yup'ik Nelson Islanders, and I (1990) have argued from different angles that gender does not carry the same weight as a classification system among Alaskan Inuit as it does in many societies, although neither of us deals with space *per se*.

The Setting

Barrow, Alaska lies on the shore of the Arctic Ocean, half-way between the Canadian border and the Bering Strait. With a population of about 3,500, it is the major community of the North Slope Borough, an Iñupiat-controlled home-rule borough which covers roughly 88,000 square miles of northernmost Alaska.⁷ Permanent settlement in the Barrow region goes back some two thousand years. Three thriving communities: *Nuvuk* (Point Barrow) *Piġniq* (Shooting Station) and *Utqiaġvik* (Barrow), existed in close proximity by the first half of the nineteenth century. *Nuvuk*, the oldest of these, extends out into the Arctic Ocean, directly in the path of migrating bowhead whales whose leisurely movements, docile behavior and tender meat have made them a preferred food for millennia. In addition, seals, beluga walrus, water fowl and fish provided a steady supply of protein from the sea while caribou, fresh water fish and fur-bearing mammals offered further important resources from the land (see Figure 7.1). Boats and dogsleds made travel possible virtually year-round and facilitated a lively system of intercontinental trade which extended from Canada to Siberia and was a source both of staple and exotic goods. Unlike their Inuit relatives to the east, the whaling and trading Iñupiat developed patterns of differential wealth accumulation. Permanent settlement was accompanied by hierarchical social relations through which complex property rights in relation to hunting and trading developed. At the same time, however, generalised access to resources and individual control over labour acted as levelling mechanisms and allowed for a great deal of the individual autonomy which marks so many hunter-gatherer societies (cf. Woodburn 1982). Contact with 'others' broadened to include Euroamericans in the mid-nineteenth century as explorers, Yankee whalers and fur traders came and left. Churches, schools, and government agencies established a permanent presence in the early decades of the twentieth century. None of these threatened Iñupiat autonomy over their land, for the 'outsiders' focus was largely on renewable resource exploita-

7. Iñupiat are not a hunting people who were, as some others may have been, pushed to the most inhospitable corners of the land. Although their territorial autonomy is now under threat, the attachment to the land they occupy has a history of millennia rather than centuries.

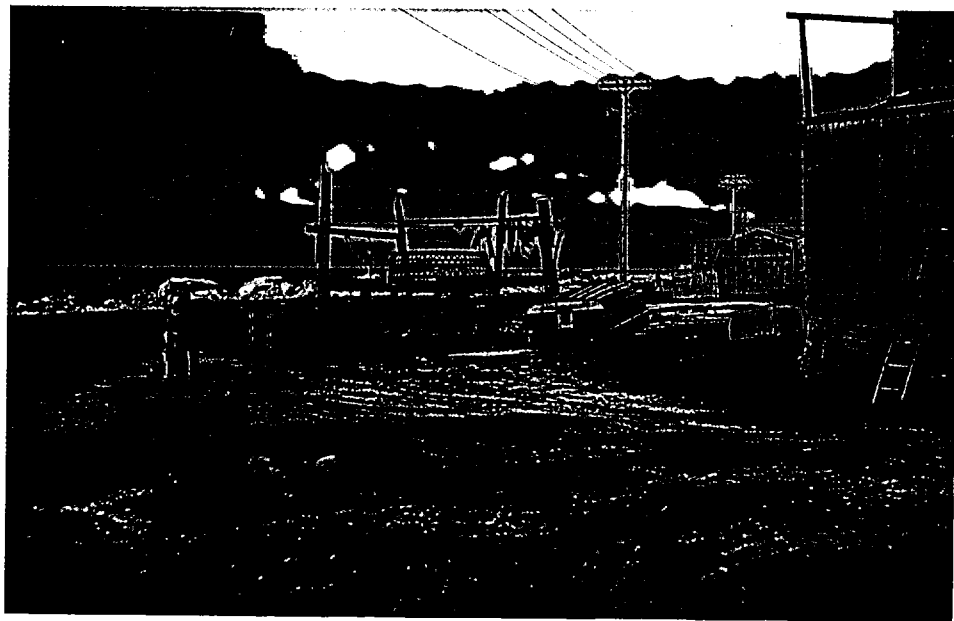


Figure 7.1 Barrow, early autumn. Houses are generally surrounded by the means to obtain food. Here you see the frame of a whaleboat which will be stored until the spring when it will be covered in walrus skin. Above it seal meat is drying. Nearby is the outboard motor boat used for summer and fall maritime hunting and fishing. Out of sight, but accessible by the ladder in the left hand corner, ducks are hanging above the *qanichaq*, or arctic entry. [location in text: page 180 – close to description of marine resources].

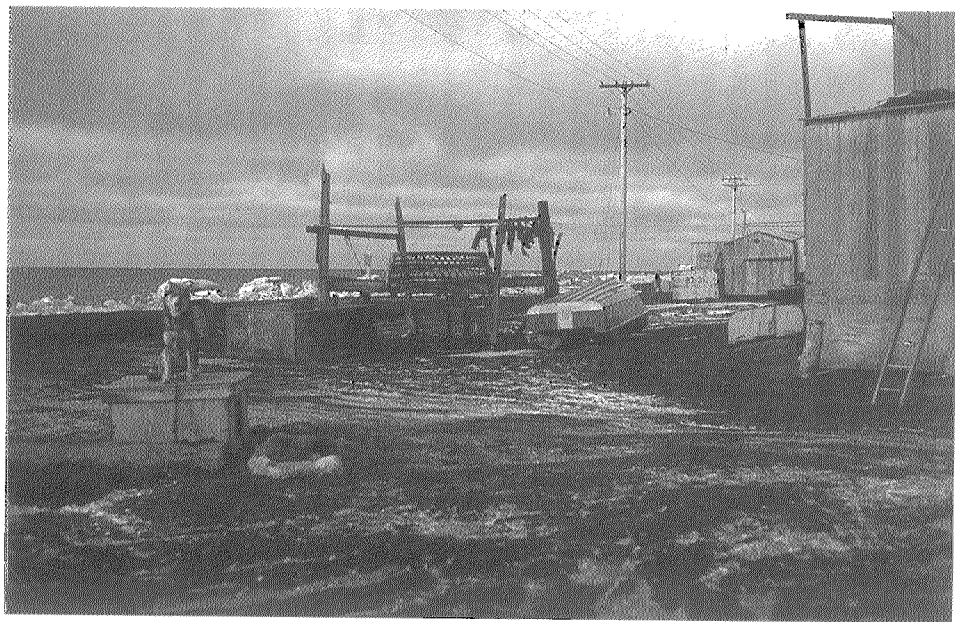


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tion.⁸ Today Iñupiat continue to hunt, and indeed define themselves as whalers. Largely due to the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968, they are also heavily involved in the national and international economies centred on petroleum development. For both military and economic reasons, the land itself has become an issue of 'national interest' and Iñupiat connection to the land has become as much a matter of politicised ethnicity as it is of social identity.

Social Organisation, Space and Time

One's place of origin and one's kin continue to provide much of the framework for the Iñupiaq experience of space. In this and the following sections, I shall argue that permanent settlements have not 'fixed' Iñupiat in any one place any more than kinship, which is fundamental to Iñupiaq social relations, has 'fixed' Iñupiaq household membership. Communities and households have had – and continue to exhibit – boundaries of great permeability. My earlier assertion that the categories 'community' and 'kinship' do indeed describe discrete spheres must, therefore, be examined. I shall do this by considering social organisation and the physical organisation of space on the tundra and in town, in relation to time, to labour, to distribution, and finally, to ritual.

Kinship is bilateral, includes affines and is exceedingly fluid. One may both establish and deny relatedness in a variety of ways which are used on a regular basis, but having relatives (as opposed to ancestors) is profoundly important. The first and perhaps most important source of the knowledge one needs to hunt remains one's kin: 'you learn to hunt what your family eats', explained Raymond Neakok, Sr. when I asked him why Barrow households followed different hunting patterns. Relatives form the core of one's social world, nourished by the constant reciprocal flow of assistance and one would be unlikely to move to a village where kinship connections could not be established.⁹ One way to do this

8. For a variety of historical reasons that I do not have the space to explore fully here, the Iñupiaq experience of early Euroamerican contact was not as one-sided as that of many indigenous peoples. Although they too suffered famine, disease and death, competition among the Europeans and highly sophisticated trading practices among the Iñupiat gave the latter considerable room to manoeuvre (see, e.g. Bockstoe 1986; Burch 1988).

9. The 'affinal inclusive' nature of Iñupiaq kinship does not merely include one's spouse. Quite distant relatives can – and do – take advantage of the affinal connection to visit unfamiliar territory and learn about its resources.

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is through marriage which may be exogamous and is neo-local.¹⁰ Marriage is easy to enter and equally easy to leave, and may be instigated by either partner. According to Murdoch (1892), couples customarily 'got married' by going hunting together and by 'acting married' on their return, i.e. by living in the same house and fulfilling their gender specific responsibilities toward the other. Today, 'going camping' (hunting which entails staying on the tundra overnight) together remains a marker of a 'serious' relationship. Spouses frequently come from different parts, and indeed men may say that such partnerships give them the opportunity to learn about new hunting territory.¹¹

Permanent settlements grew up where bowhead whales passed close to the shore during their spring and fall migrations. They appeared along with the development of technology to hunt, transport and preserve whales as well as the variety of other land and sea mammals already mentioned. Using dogs and boats, in Dumond's (1975:173) words, 'to transport large kit over considerable distances', Iñupiat were able to live in one place and exploit a wide range of resources. This was by no means anarchic. According to Burch (1988), Iñupiat at the start of the nineteenth century formed several 'countries', identified by place name and encompassing clearly bounded territories. Any *Utqiagvingmiut* ('person-of-Barrow') had generalised access to all of the resources of the region. At the same time, a number of institutionalised ways of gaining access to others' territory existed. People of one territory might arrange to enter another during times of the year when the 'owners' were elsewhere. A system of trading partnerships also developed which connected explicitly non-related individuals from different villages and thus provided regular access to resources not at one's immediate disposal. In addition, seasonal movement often included attendance at one of several trade fairs.

10. Today, as citizens of the United States, Iñupiat may only enter into monogamous marriages. Prior to the interventions of missionaries and federal officials, there were few fixed rules. Monogamy was the norm, but many people also participated in spouse exchange, or what Burch more accurately calls 'non-residential marriage'. These were enduring economic/sexual partnerships between couples. The balanced nature of the marital division of labour meant that multiple spouses, while not prohibited, were relatively uncommon. Polygyny was generally restricted to wealthy men, but they were by no means expected to have more than one wife. Polyandry was not completely unknown, but was certainly the rarest marriage form (Burch 1975). Today, when young people refer to 'Eskimo marriage', they are referring to multiple sexual partners in an enduring relationship.

11. According to Burch (1975, and even more vehemently in a recent personal communication), 'non-residential marriage' was most likely to occur between partners from different Iñupiat societies, quite explicitly to enlarge one's resource base.

These were held at points along the coast, spanned the region between the Mackenzie River in Canada and the Seward Peninsula in western Alaska and were established well before the first Euroamericans appeared on the scene. Individual access to resources, then, covered a wide geographic area, included a number of strategies and was influenced, but not controlled by community membership. Indeed, individual autonomy of movement was and remains highly valued. Movement was spurred by needs to find food, to trade, to avoid tension, or simply for the enjoyment of change. Early ethnography suggests that residence patterns fluctuated between sedentism, seasonal variation and semi-nomadism (Simpson 1875, Murdoch 1892, Giddings 1967). Some people remained in *Nuvuk* (Point Barrow), or *Utqiagvik* (Barrow), for instance, on a permanent basis; some followed a seasonal rhythm, moving between shore and inland while others spent entire years travelling the riverine systems to follow the trade fairs mentioned above; still others varied their patterns between years of residence and periods of nomadism that spanned the coast, the inland rivers and the Brooks Range (see, e.g. IHLC 1980). In the late twentieth century, movement continues to be regarded as an acceptable, and often desirable, response to a variety of issues. Permanent settlement, then, has by no means entailed immobility for individuals or for groups, either in the past or in the present.

If one can choose where one lives, with whom one works, with whom one shares the products of one's labour, and if these may change on a daily basis, it becomes impossible to talk of a 'domestic unit', either of production or of consumption. A 'domestic sphere' ceases to be a useful category for analysis. If at the same time, one adds the knowledge that people may choose which relatives they will recognise, that they may choose whether to leave or remain in a particular place, the division of social relations into those of 'kinship' and 'community' might easily seem to depend on anthropological, rather than indigenous categories. To argue that they are indeed powerful Inupiaq categories, we must turn to other factors.

Organisation of Space

Although one hunts in the territory one knows, and that is strongly influenced by one's early experiences with kin, access to

hunting territory itself is not subject to spatial regulation. When I asked where people 'could' hunt, I was often corrected, as the following example illustrates: 'Since time immemorial, it's been this way – 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.' (E. Kignak, in Bodenhorn 1989: 85; trans. F. Mongoyak)¹²

The only fixed sites are fish camps which belong to individuals while they live. If someone wants to hunt while the camp is in use, they are expected to ask permission (a formality), and to donate a portion of the catch to the camp residents. Otherwise, rules are designed to guarantee rather than to restrict access to animal resources.

In town, space is more clearly defined than on the tundra, both in terms of houses that belong to individuals and in regard to community places. Iñupiaq households are fluid to the point of being exceedingly difficult to define. They cannot be classed as a unit of production. Cooperative labour is central to the activities of men, women and adolescents, but the labour pool is an ever-changing mosaic of related and non-related partners. Nor do they form a unit of consumption, as many fruits of household members' labour move along highly intricate sharing-networks. Indeed, none of the functional, locational or biological criteria set forth in Laslett and Wall (1972), for instance, can be met easily. Meat flows into and out of the household, meals are shared, tools and equipment shift hands at a steady rate. A cousin may come to stay for a month or more; a son or a daughter may decide to go live with a grandparent. For the most part, people under one roof are *ila*, relatives, but beyond that, a single household shape is difficult to pin down. The sharing-networks through which food, children and services regularly flow mark the kinship sphere.¹³

Despite the fluidity of household membership, houses are identified as belonging to someone and they 'say' something. Single adults rarely live in houses on their own and households of conjugal couples without children are only slightly more common. Houses 'should' have children in them, but the children

12. Neakok, Sr put it even more succinctly: 'In our society, you use it, it's yours' (Bodenhorn 1989: 41).

13. People share food with a wide variety of others; 'sharing' is not restricted to kinsfolk. Sharing multiple resources on a regular basis is conducted among those who consider themselves relatives.

themselves move easily between them: to eat, to sleep, to 'visit for a while', to be fostered, or adopted. Husbands and wives are the fixtures. Moving in under one roof signals marriage, moving out indicates divorce. As I shall argue throughout the paper, the marital couple is culturally constructed as the pivotal link between animals and humans. The house is the physicalised locus of that ritualised relationship in the kinship sphere.

This goes directly against a number of people who argue that women, houses and wombs are explicitly linked (Fienup-Riordan 1983; Graburn 1973; Saladin D'Anglure 1986) and that houses are therefore 'female'. I will return to this later, saying here only that from the earliest ethnography (Murdoch 1892; Simpson 1875), Iñupiaq houses were divided into male and female spaces. One could, in fact, argue that wombs – which shelter males and females – are associated with houses, and not the reverse. Indeed, Saladin D'Anglure's (1986) informant often describes womb interiors as houses, divided into male and female spheres and furnished with male and female artefacts. Space within the house was gendered. The house itself was, and continues to be, at the very least, ambiguously classified.

The most important extra-household institutions in Iñupiaq communities were the *qargich* (pl), most frequently translated as 'men's houses', which were the focus of social activity until the missionaries suppressed them in the early twentieth century. Although men primarily would work there during the day, they were transformed in the evening into community centres, where men and women participated in singing, dancing, story-telling and shamanic exhibitions. They were the sites of the numerous feasts organised during the Arctic winter nights and provided the venue for inter-village events such as the Messenger Feast.¹⁴ *Qargich* were associated with whaling crews and a community the size of Barrow would have several. Members might be relatives, but whaling crew participation, not kinship, was the recruitment requirement. In addition to these physically defined public places, various ceremonies connected with whaling would occur at any one of a number of commonly recognised sites along the shore. Today the beach sites remain important, but, as we

14. See, for instance, IHLC 1981: 559–61 for descriptions as they were recalled in the 1980s. Messenger Feasts occurred when one trading partner sent out (by messenger) a 'wish list' of gifts to be received from a partner. Once the gifts were assembled, invitations were sent out and a massive inter-village feast would ensue.

shall see, other community activities have moved out of the *qargich* and into the churches, gymnasium and community centre.

The *qargich*, then, was arguably a physical manifestation of a social category beyond kinship. Other social institutions suggest this as well: trading partnerships which were explicitly conducted between non-kin, and leadership positions which were achieved rather than ascribed. This distinction receives further elaboration in distribution and ritual practice. First, however, I want to introduce the element of time with a reconsideration of Mauss' theory of seasonal changes in Inuit social morphology.

Space and Time

Mauss (1906) was probably the first anthropologist to discuss Inuit social organisation in terms of space. In *Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo* he suggests that Inuit gather in communities during a winter season marked by richly elaborated ritual. Summer is the time to spread across the tundra, hunting and fishing in smaller kin groups. Mauss's interpretation was that Inuit social morphology shifted from the sacred/social to the profane/individual with the seasons. Although he was wrong to assign a sacred/secular dichotomy to these alternating strategies, a seasonal morphology I believe, has merit, best defined in terms of kinship and community.¹⁵ We therefore turn to the annual cycle and map time onto Iñupiaq uses of space.

The annual cycle in the 1980s is marked simultaneously by customary hunting patterns which echo those recorded by nineteenth century ethnographers and Euroamerican institutions such as church and school events. Spring whaling involves approximately three quarters of the adult community directly and draws a number of Barrow people back to town who work elsewhere during the rest of the year. They may come from one of the non-whaling inland villages such as Atqasuk, or from 'outside' (i.e. a city outside of the North Slope Borough). Crews undertake their preparations in town during the late winter months (February – March);

15. Burch (personal communication) questions Mauss' relevance for Alaskan material, noting that in northwest Alaska at least 'it was very unusual... for conjugal families to disperse in the summer except, perhaps, for a couple of days.' The idea that there is a different moral weight assigned to seasonal activities I find convincing, as shall be discussed. What Mauss missed entirely is that sacred components exist for the activities of each season, primarily because his Durkheimian definition of 'the sacred' is confined to an equally Durkheimian definition of 'community'.

individuals may occasionally go ice-fishing, ptarmigan-hunting and the like, but trips are not usually extended. Whaling itself lasts while open leads in the ice and migrating bowhead coincide, from approximately mid-April to late May.¹⁶ The last weekends of this month as well as early June are the best times to go *nigliaq*-, geese-hunting, an activity that perhaps more than anything else is pleasurably anticipated by married couples. Families – conjugal and extended – take off to ‘go camping’ for the Memorial Day Weekend and Barrow is often left feeling distinctly ‘ghost-town-ish’. The whaling celebrations bring people back to town in mid-June, again attracting Iñupiat with any Barrow connections. This is the last major community event of the season.

Summer is a quiet time. A number of people go out to ‘fish camp’ – some in family groups, some on their own. A few will spend the entire summer out on the tundra; others will take extended weekends. Still others remain in town, but take advantage of good weather to ‘go boating’. Many people have built shelters out at *Pigniq* – site of one of the three original villages, but abandoned as a permanent community since the early decades of this century. It is connected to Barrow by a road and serviced in the summer by municipal transportation. Situated on a narrow neck of land, it is an ideal spot for hunting ducks. The long, bright Arctic nights can well be spent drinking tea, visiting with friends and waiting to take advantage of the occasional flock of ducks already winging southward. Many people will go to Fairbanks in July for the Eskimo-Indian Olympics; a few will travel to Kotzebue during the time of the traditional trade fairs; ‘annual leave’ from jobs is often taken to travel inland or to neighbouring villages for berry picking and/or fishing. Late summer is the time for walrus-hunting, a village-based activity undertaken by groups of men; autumn caribou-hunting and fishing again call for camping trips which may last from an extended weekend to a number of weeks, depending on needs, desires, availability of time, resources and, of course, the weather. Although the activities follow their traditional pattern, they are often marked by the American equivalent of the bank holiday; just as Memorial Day weekend is the most common time for geese-hunting, so Labour Day weekend (in early September) is popular for a trip inland to ‘look around’ for caribou. All of these activities are followed by

16. The imposition of whaling quotas by the International Whaling Commission has, since 1978, occasionally shortened the season.

people who work as well as people who are unemployed. As I shall discuss, hunting costs money and a wide variety of strategies exists to meet the need for hunted food as well as the need for cash. For the moment, what I want to emphasise is that individuals may choose one, all, none, or a combination of the hunting activities described above. Hunting partners most probably will shift according to activity; both the region and the resources exploited are a matter of individual decision. With the exception of beluga, which is defined as a communal resource, animals caught will travel along the sharing-networks that are, for the most part, decided upon by husbands and wives and which, again for the most part, mark the kinship sphere.

The autumn brings a new school year and, shortly thereafter, the fall whaling season. From this point until the end of spring whaling, the cycle is punctuated by a series of community-oriented events – again conforming to the dominant American calendar, but performed with a uniquely Iñupiaq twist. Thanksgiving and Christmas are community, not family, occasions, marked by the communal distribution of Iñupiaq (hunted) food, commensality and *aggi-*, or ‘Eskimo dancing’. The period between Christmas and New Year’s Day is taken up with ‘the games’ – traditional Iñupiaq games of skill and endurance when individuals compete against each other within age cohorts, and ‘marrieds’ are pitted against ‘singles’ in community-wide teams. These take place in the community centre, finish with an all-night marathon beginning on New Year’s Eve, and culminate in another ‘Eskimo dance’ on the night of January 1. Within the last few years, a new version of the customary Messenger Feast, *Kivgiq*, has been reintroduced in January. Although the original, as I have mentioned, was a competitive give-away feast that matched trading partners against each other in ostentatious generosity, the focus of the 1990s version is once again communal feasting and dancing.¹⁷ February–March heralds the annual Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission meeting, which concludes with a pot-luck dinner of Iñupiaq food and an Eskimo Dance. This is the time when representatives of all of the whaling communities gather to agree on strategies for increasing and maintaining autonomous control of subsistence whaling. The feasts and dances are a celebration of inter-village hospitality as well as of political cohesion. As the days become lighter but remain cold, a

17. Because of the timing of these events, I have as yet been unable to participate. My information is based solely on accounts given to me by Iñupiaq friends.

day of games, *qitiktitchirat*-, is organised on the frozen lagoon on the edge of town. This too is a 'modern' reintroduction of older forms, not 'pristine' by any means and no less community-oriented because of it. Soon spring whaling begins again; a successful season is celebrated with one or more *Nalukataq* feasts; school lets out and the emphasis on community abates until the fall.

Summer, then, is by no means a time of individual isolation, nor, as Burch pointed out (footnote 12), a time when one's social world boils down to the conjugal family as suggested by Mauss. Rather, it is a time of sociality. People do things together, travel together, play cards, go to parties, and go camping together. But it is not one that is community-oriented – no commensal feasts, nor celebrations of group process such as those which mark the whaling cycle. Winter, on the other hand, is filled with activities that are social in the Durkheimian sense of society; the focus is not only extra-household, extra-kin, but also emphasises participation: dancing, games, eating. It is participation that is defined by Iñupiat in terms of community; it both allows one to become and marks one as a community member.¹⁸

'Community', then, might be said to be a time, a set of locations, certain kinds of activities, and participation. It is marked by extra-household, extra-kinship institutions and is, by any measure, public. It is now time to add gender to the equation.

Gender, The Division of Labour and Distribution Practices

Of the 78 households with whom I worked in Barrow, 42 (54%) had at least one household member who hunted regularly; another 20 (26%) hunted occasionally; 58 (76%) of households took a direct role in whaling and 100% were involved in sharing-networks which gave them access to 'real', or hunted, food and, by extension, 'real' identity. Hamburgers, pizzas and Chinese food may be eaten with pleasure; new foods are tested with curiosity, but I repeatedly heard Iñupiaq identity talked about in terms of food. A baby who shows a liking for *maktaaq* (beluga blubber) is pointed

18. This was made quite explicit to me on a number of occasions. When I first began to work at ICAS, in the lull of late August, I was reassured that things would 'start happening' in the fall. It was made clear that it would be 'better' if I took part (as I was of course delighted to do), since so many outsiders – teachers and hospital staff for the most part – did not. If I held back at a communal distribution because I felt I would be taking a valuable resource; if I refrained from taking part in discussions when the 'singles' were choosing their next game at Christmas, I was chided, literally with the words, 'go ahead, you're a member of the community'.

out with a chuckle, 'he's real Iñupiaq, that one'; an adult may say, 'I'm Iñupiaq, I eat Iñupiaq food.' Public hearings on proposed development are filled with impassioned testimony regarding the importance of 'our garden', the sea. Shared food, in fact, forms the core of those networks which are central to the provisioning of Iñupiaq households. Sharing-networks may or may not include a flow of mutual assistance, tools, equipment, child care and/or money; none exists, to my knowledge, without 'Iñupiaq' food.

Barrow in the late twentieth century is a full-fledged member of the US economic system. It costs money to pay for heat, electricity and water, to pay for the cable television which broadcasts twelve channels around the clock, to buy bread, milk or Pampers in the local store, or to purchase an airline ticket to the next village, to one of Alaska's 'big' cities, or to Hawaii for vacation, a popular choice. And it costs money to hunt: \$25 (US) for a box of shells, \$5,000 (US) for a snow-machine, \$700 (US) for a sled, and so on. Many strategies are followed to provision households. In some cases, one person works (not necessarily a household member) and provides another with the wherewithal to go hunting. This may be a spouse, sibling, parent, or child. There is no cultural construction as to who 'should' be earning money. Some people work for short, intensive periods and accumulate enough overtime pay to support long periods of unemployment during which they can hunt full-time. Many others work full-time, building up 'annual leave', and taking 'leave without pay' to go hunting, fishing or berry picking. Kruse (1982) found a positive correlation between education, income, the number of subsistence activities engaged in per year and the amount of time spent pursuing them.

In 1986, 252 Iñupiaq men and 229 Iñupiaq women were working full-time in Barrow; a similar ratio counted themselves unemployed. In the early 1970s, the pattern was for women to work full-time 'pink-collar' jobs while men preferred seasonal construction with flexible time which allowed them to hunt. By 1977, women had started moving into technical and professional jobs, a trend that continues into the late 1980s.¹⁹ Within the past decade,

19. See Bodenhorn 1989; Kruse 1982; Worl & Smythe 1986 for specific numbers and trends over two decades. I was asked by the editor if the predominance of women in 'pink-collar' occupations did not suggest a *de facto* sexual division of labour. Women's increasing participation in 'white-collar' positions, I think, argues against this. Certainly when employing institutions were non-Iñupiaq-run (schools and hospitals), women were hired to do what Euroamericans define as 'women's' work. It is within the past two decades that this pattern has changed, along with the development of more Iñupiaq-run institutions. I was never told that women 'should' do secretarial work.

women have occupied public positions such as magistrate, state legislator, Executive Director of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, school superintendent, city manager, and chair of the Village Corporation under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Access to cash is necessary for survival; access to *niqipiaq*, real food, is necessary for social identity. What is important here is that the former was not discussed with me in terms of gender. Earning money was not talked about, either as a 'male' activity, nor as somehow more 'important' than other forms of labour. When I asked about 'men's' and 'women's' work, waged labour was simply not mentioned.

An explicitly gendered division of labour emerges when talk turns to the complex of activities defined by Iñupiat as 'subsistence'. Men make and maintain tools and equipment, although women may buy and own them. The former go out after animals and fish. They may hunt alone, with partners (kin or otherwise), or with a spouse. Women hunt occasionally, fish, butcher the meat, transform the hide into clothing, preserve and prepare food and take care of children – who may or may not be theirs, and with a great deal of help from male and female kin. Although relatives might be called on to help, the marital relationship was and is the ideal form within which these services are carried out. As Belcher Island Inuit said to Lee Guemple (1986), hard work is something one does *for* (his emphasis) someone of the other gender. This is indeed a gendered division of labour, for it is not construed as 'natural' (see also Briggs 1974; Guemple 1986). Women who can shoot straight as well as butcher are considered 'skilled', not 'manly'. By the same token, a man should be able to repair a rip in his parka if he needs to. All knowledge contributes to survival skills. 'Survival' rather than 'biology' was the most frequent reason given to me to explain action.

In terms of this division of labour and a gendered use of space, the historical record suggests that both women and men were familiar with land and sea. Charles D. Brower, one of the first Euroamerican whalers to winter over in Barrow, noted that: 'The women worked in the whaling crews the same as the men, were just as good at paddling and did not seem afraid of going alongside of a whale...' (n.d.: 117–18). Similarly, Burch (personal communication) pointed out that when men hunted on foot, women were expected to take the dog team out to collect their husbands' catch. They were better dog handlers than men, 'often better

trackers' and equally knowledgeable about the land. Knowledge, in fact, was one important factor in the hunting enterprise that arguably was not gendered. As in many hunting and gathering societies, women's observations about the land and animals' movements were actively solicited. Knowledge continues to be constructed as a public resource and one is expected to share what one knows.²⁰ Beyond the gendered division of labour, few hunting skills are specialised; several couples in fact described how they survived virtually on their own for the first few years of their marriages. Still, most hunting is undertaken with others and larger animals – bearded seal, walrus or beluga for instance – are often pursued in groups.

How resources are distributed in hunter/gatherer societies is increasingly a subject of inquiry (e.g. Altman and Peterson 1988; Ingold, Riches and Woodburn 1988; Wilmsen 1989). Iñupiaq distribution practices distinguish between 'sharing' (an on-going reciprocal process) and 'shares' (a portion of the catch earned by individuals). In general, entitlement to a share, or *ningik*, is earned by contributing towards the means of production, or by furnishing one's labour. Contributing food to a whaling crew, giving a hunter the present of a rifle, helping to butcher an animal, or providing fuel to a group of hunters may all earn one a 'share' of the catch. This is not gendered. A woman who owns the harpoon (a 'male' instrument) used to kill a whale is just as entitled to her *ningik* as she is if she helps to butcher a bearded seal (a 'female' activity). Once the share has been transferred, obligation ceases between the parties involved. Meat that circulates as a function of 'sharing', on the other hand, forms part of the reciprocal process which both binds kin to each other and ties humans and animals together.

I have discussed this distinction between 'shares' and 'sharing' elsewhere (1988; 1989). For the purposes of this study, however, I want to suggest that the animals themselves fall into two categories: animals whose 'shares' are designated only for those who participated in the hunt, and animals whose 'shares' are explicitly meant for the entire community. The former (seals, caribou, walrus, fish, etc.) are divided on the tundra, the ice and in or near the house. How they are divided is a matter for the individuals

20. In collecting life histories, it was clear that both boys and girls, for instance, have been exhorted to 'get the white man's education' and to bring it back to the community.

involved. The 'communal' group (beluga, polar bear, bowhead whale) are butchered on community territory and shares are distributed not only to those who have taken part in the hunt, but to all community residents as well. In both cases, people talk about receiving 'their' shares: an entitlement, not a gift.²¹

The whale, the largest of the animals, serves as the focus of the greatest social and cultural elaboration involving hunting, taking hunting out of the kinship and into the community sphere. Bowhead whales are very large animals, one of which may provide up to sixty tons of usable meat to the community. It is possible, but difficult, for a single crew to kill a bowhead; several crews spread along the open lead greatly increase a community's chance for a successful hunt. Led by the *umialik* (lit., 'boat owner') and his wife ('the whaling couple'), a whaling crew endures over time; its members may be, but are not necessarily, related and it includes the specialist position of harpooner.²² Whaling celebrations encompass both shares (distribution) and sharing (hospitality); they involve explicitly extra-kinship social relations and occur in community spaces.

The whaling season starts as the sun reappears over the Arctic horizon. Men gather to work on the wooden frame of the *umiaq*, the whaling boat, and to make sure their equipment is in working order. As the days rapidly gain light, crews set out to cut ice roads in the direction they hope to camp, somewhere on the edge of the open lead through which the migrating whales will pass. In town, the most expert sewers (women) will be contracted to 'dress' the *umiaq*, i.e. to sew its walrus skin cover which will allow it to travel safely through the spring ice. Radio contact is maintained with other whaling villages along the coast; news of approaching whales and the success or failure of more westerly villages travels instantly through the region. When the moment seems right, the crew sets out for camp.

21. See also Altman and Peterson (1983) who found that the distribution of meat is likewise complicated among the Gunwinggu of Arnhem Land, Australia. Small animals are not subject to the same rules of generalised distribution as are the larger animals such as kangaroos. The explicit right of the hunter to retain small game, the authors feel, thus recognizes the right of the household to ensure its own provisioning.

22. *Umialik* is a position of relatively high status; it is achieved, is based on authority and respect rather than power and is dependent on followership, to echo Collier (1983). People are free to change crews as they are free to change hunting partners or place of residence. As Ernest Burch pointed out (personal communication), many people might achieve the position of owning a boat without becoming an *umialik* who must not only have the resources needed to build a boat, but must also show the proper characteristics of a leader: knowledge, an even-temper, generosity and the like.

Once a whale is caught, the entire community is invited to help pull the whale onto the ice. The crews gather to help with the butchering. One man stands on top of the animal to make sure the correct cuts are being made; the wife, or co-captain, generally directs the cutters where to take each piece of meat or mak-tak (whale skin and blubber) which is laid out in precise shares on the ice (figures 7.2 and 7.3). There is an ordered division of shares between crews and another one within crews. The latter follows the general rule for the division of game: everyone who contributed material or labour to the crew is entitled to a share, with the captain and his wife (the whaling couple), the harpooner, and the harpoon owner receiving an extra share (figure 7.4). Although women no longer paddle as they did in Charles D. Brower's time, participation may take a variety of forms: women who work full-time may send out coffee and snow-machine fuel; they might furnish a harpoon, bake bread, or go out to camp to help cook, thus earning a share. Half of the whaling couple's share is destined for communal distribution during a series of whaling feasts that mark the annual cycle. Before discussing these feasts, let us turn to cosmology and ritualised space.

Cosmology, Humans and Animals

Animals, according to many northern hunters, have intent and decide to give themselves up to be killed. Hunting is a sacred act in which all participants must be ritually proper. According to Iñupiat, animals give themselves up to men whose wives are generous and skilful; the men themselves must also treat the animal with proper respect, but it is the woman to whom the animal offers itself. This came to me as somewhat of a surprise, being well indoctrinated in anthropologists' models of hunters in general and Inuit hunters in particular. During the first autumn of my stay in Barrow, I was talking with Ernie Frankson, a whaler from Point Hope, about preparations for the fall hunt and said something about 'only men hunting'. He took a moment and then responded: 'the whale comes to the whaling captain's wife.' When asking a friend about this, she remembered one very successful inland hunter who stated: 'I'm not the great hunter, my wife is'. He was referring to her generosity and skill at attracting the animals, not to her accuracy with a rifle. Other people agreed:



Figure 7.2 Butchering a whale. Once the whale has been pulled onto the ice, members from all the present crews will help to butcher it. [location: p 195 with discussion of butchering].



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Figure 7.3 Dividing whale shares on the ice. The butchered meat is first divided into crew shares on the ice. These will be subdivided into further shares for individual crew members once the meat has been taken back to the village. [location: close to previous photo].



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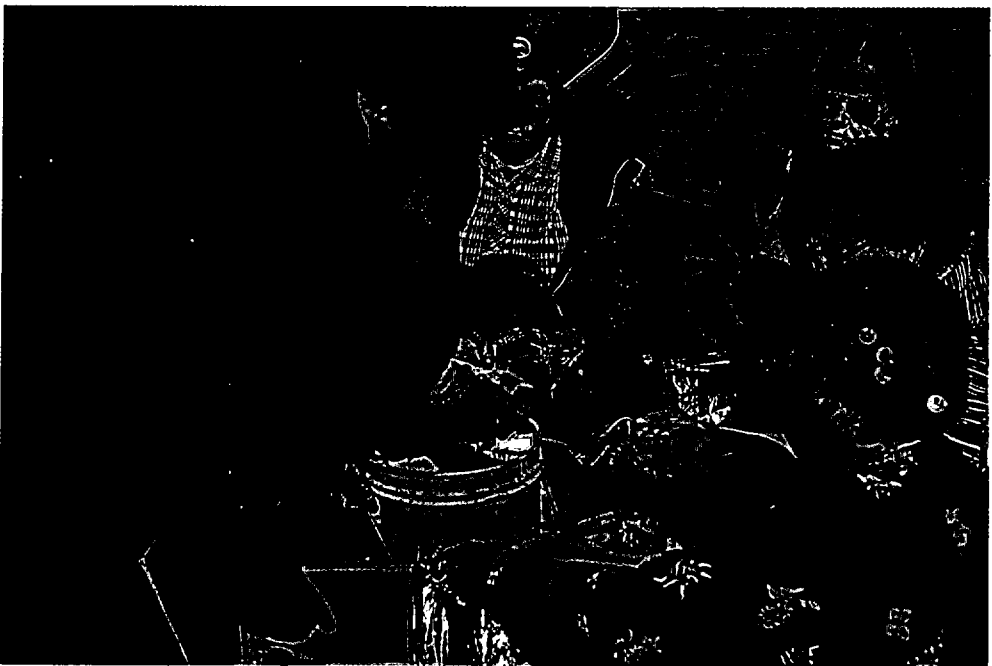


Figure 7.4 Wainwright Nalukataq, 1985. Distribution of shares. Plastic buckets and plastic sacks are used to collect a household's shares. This year was an abundant one, and each household received shares according to the number of people who regularly ate there. In harder years, each household would receive the same amount. [location: close to above].



Figure 7.4 Wainwright Nalukataq, 1985. Distribution of shares. Plastic buckets and plastic sacks are used to collect a household's shares. This year was an abundant one, and each household received shares according to the number of people who regularly ate there. In harder years, each household would receive the same amount. [location: close to above].

'Yes, these were very strong beliefs'; 'it has been like that from way back.'

Two major responsibilities that humans must exercise in order to continue the animal/human relationship are first to invite/attract the animals, and then to act as good hosts so that they will want to come again. Customarily wives had ritual responsibility to ask for the animals. Dinah and David Frankson of Point Hope relate how wives would ask the moon for animals and good health. 'Whatever Alingnaq (the man in the moon) put in a woman's bowl, that was what her husband would get during his hunting activities' (Pulo 1980: 15-6). The whaling captain-wife would ask for whales in the spring; all the others asked for game animals throughout the year.

The husband's proper behaviour was, and is, also fundamentally important. A wounded animal, for instance, should never be allowed to wander off and die on its own, for when a man has killed an animal, he must make sure that its *iñua*, its soul, is treated hospitably. Sea mammals would be thirsty after a life in salt water, and so they should be offered a drink of fresh water (by a woman); land animals should have their heads severed so that their souls may return from whence the animals came. The hunter's wife butchers the meat and shares it generously; the animal's spirit is pleased by this and, in reciprocity, will offer itself up again to the hunter. Just as the wife's skill with the *ulu* (woman's knife) allows her to share meat widely and thus attract the animals, so too is her needle an instrument of the hunt. Customarily it was the wife's job to make all of the hunter's clothing; the animal's hide would be transformed into a 'second skin' for the hunter, which if pleasingly done would draw the animals to him (Chaussonnet 1988). Today women no longer clothe their husbands entirely in the skins of hunted animals. But sewing remains a highly valued skill and young women who did not learn how to sew as adolescents, frequently begin after they are married. Wives still make parkas for their husbands; their skill in creating pleasing designs for the 'fancy trim' and full ruff adds stature to the wearer making a public appearance. And a clean, new *qatignisi* (whaling shirt) is still part of the preparations for spring whaling. It is the wife's job to attract the animals, and thus, in Iñupiaq terms, to hunt.

Customarily the spousal relationship was even more ritualised for whaling than for the other hunting. Then, as now, it was not

marital couples in general who were responsible for the success of the hunt, but the whaling couple, the *umialik*, the whaling captain-husband-and-wife. I have already mentioned that it was the whaling captain-wife whose job it was to ask for whales in the spring. Rainey (1947, 245, 259-64) also detailed a number of mutual ritual responsibilities which were to be carried out by the couple. The husband was to hire a skilled craftsman to make the wooden pot from which the wife was to offer the whale its welcoming drink of water. The wife would hire an old woman to make mittens which she had to wear when carrying the pot. The husband would keep her left-handed mitten in the boat with him during whaling season; he would wear special boots made for him by his wife, and her belt. By the same token, after helping to launch the *umiag*, she would place the special pot and her husband's drum by the entrance of the house for the duration of the hunt. Upon the successful catch, the wife would offer the drink of water; after the whale was butchered, she would offer her husband a drink from the same pot. The pot, cooked meat, hunting charms, amulets, the hammer used to make the pot and shavings from the paddles were then placed under a tripod formed by three paddles, over which the wife threw a parka.

If the whales did not come, a ritual marital pair would have to travel to the spirit world to rectify matters. According to David Frankson, 'in the old days', if the ice did not open in time for spring whaling an *angatkuaq* (shaman) was sent to the *Itivyaat* (people who lived under ground). The shaman, however, could not do this alone, but needed a partner:

Whenever a male *angatkuaq* was sent to the *Itivyaat*, the wife of a captain was sent to carry the *angatkuaq's* divining rod.... The men did not hesitate to give up their wives for this purpose because of the necessity to catch a whale. It is said that Kataliuraq (Frankson's grandmother) was chosen to go to the *Itivyaat*. However, since she was a woman, a captain was named to follow her. In the case of a female *angatkuaq*, a man is chosen to follow her... (Frankson in Pulo 1980: 52)

While the men are out on the ice, it is the job of the whaling captain-wife to be welcoming; she must move slowly, think peaceful thoughts and act generously. The whale may then be attracted and offer itself up to her husband. Imagery connecting whales, women and the house is most explicit in a story recorded by Rasmussen (1929: 24-6). Raven is flying over the ocean,

becomes exhausted and falls into the sea. He tumbles 'right into a house, a beautiful, lovely house where there was light and warmth. On the platform sat a young woman, busy with a burning lamp.' The woman is the soul of the whale; her lamp is its heart. It is the woman at the hearth that gives the whale life. This provides an important clue as to why the *umialik*-wife's ritual responsibilities are physicalised in the house. The whale-woman in her house sees the whaling captain-woman in hers, senses her welcoming spirit, decides this is a good place 'to camp' and offers herself to the whaling crew.

Missionaries attempted to suppress many of these practices in the early twentieth century, although much of the detail I have just presented (Rainey 1947; Frankson, in Pulo 1980) was gathered in the 1940s or later. During my stay in Barrow clearly marked ways of inviting were less in evidence, but the obligation of the whaling captain-wife to offer an inviting hearth remains strong. It also continues to be the whaling couple who must make sure the whales are treated well. Patrick Attungana, a Point Hope whaling captain, had this to say a few years ago:

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... 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... the dead whale's being or spirit return to the live whales.... 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 (1986: 16ff).

Once the whale has given itself up, then, it remains the whaling couple's responsibility to provide hospitality. The most important hosting activities are the community feasts which take place several times during the year. The first is immediate. As the whale is being butchered, women prepare *uunaaliit* (literally 'hot things', boiled *maktak*) to serve with coffee out on the ice. Simultaneously, sledsful of meat are being transported back to the whaling couple's house. Women connected to the crew begin to cook all possible parts of the whale: meat, *maktak*, heart, tongue and other organs; others will bring cakes, drinks, bread and the

like. When the feast is prepared, the captain's flag flies high over the house. This is an invitation for anyone in town to come and have a meal. Cooked food will once again be served at the end of the whaling season when the crew serves boiled *maktak* to all comers on the beach to mark the moment when the boat is brought off the ice for the last time.²³ Each of the above is an example of 'pure' hospitality. Food is prepared and explicit invitations are sent out to the entire community: the flag flying over the *umialik* house, announcements broadcast over the short-wave radio to 'come get *uunaalik* on the beach'. Each is conducted on a different site: the first on the ice, the edge of the lead through which the whales travel; the second is the whaling couple's house, heart of the community; the third is on the shore, the boundary between land and sea, the point at which the societies of animals and of humans meet.

Throughout the year, the whaling couple have the responsibility to provide meat for people who are in need; today this might include donations to the Seniors' Center in Barrow, or shipments of food to the Iñupiaq inmates in the Fairbanks prison. Their crew should not go out on the ice again until all of their share has been eaten or given away. Three more celebrations occur, however, which involve all community members in the public sphere. These are *Nalukataq*, Thanksgiving and Christmas, feasts which include both the distribution of shares by successful whaling crews and the provision of their hospitality to the entire community.

Nalukataq, or 'blanket toss', is held about six weeks after the end of the whaling season; the crews have spent the intervening time hunting ducks and geese, preparing *mikigaaq* (whale meat and *maktak*, fermented in whale blood), and in general, getting ready to feed several hundred guests. On the day itself, a windbreak is erected at a traditional site on the beach, tables are set up in the centre, and quantities of food are brought out.²⁴ A short distance away, the walrus skin 'blanket' has been set up, a trampoline from which people will be tossed into the air. Around noon people begin to appear, carrying eating utensils and plastic sacks to carry home their shares; children try out their skill on the blanket and

23. It is significant that this food is cooked. *Quaq*, or frozen meat, may be distributed as a share, or it may be shared hospitably as part of a meal. Thus, its status is unclear. Shares are never distributed in the form of cooked food which is therefore an unambiguous marker of hospitality.

24. *Nalukataq* feasts may be held by successful whaling crews either singly or together. The exact organisation of the feasts varies from village to village; this description reflects how I experienced the event in Barrow during the five years I was there.

people sit around and visit, usually in small family groups. Soon the feasting begins. Pairs of male and female crew members serve soup which is eaten on the spot. Then the distribution of shares gets underway. Containers of *mikigaq*, *maktak*, whale meat and *quaq* (usually frozen fish or caribou) make the rounds, again carried by female/male crew member pairs. In a good year, each household will get shares according to the number of people who eat together; in a bad year, shares are allocated by household, regardless of size. Anyone who is in the community on the day is entitled to a share²⁵ and the village is usually crammed with North Slope friends and relatives for the event. People eat their fill and pack the remainder to take home. The feast is finished with quantities of hot tea, 'hard tack' and fruit for all and special cakes for the elders. The distribution of shares, then, begins and ends with the hospitable provision of a meal: food that may not be classified as 'shares' and that therefore may only be 'shared'.

Afterwards, men and women show off their skill (and their parkas) on the blanket toss until finally the dancing starts, around mid-evening. The drummers (men) sit tapping quietly on their drums, while behind them is a row of singers (women). The walrus skin blanket is put down before them to form a platform. The music is performed by these two rows of musicians. The dancers come from the audience; they dance in solidarity, in high spirits, but mostly in thanks that the season has been a successful one. Men and women dance together as crew members, as relatives, as friends.

The other two feasts, which take place well after the sun has disappeared entirely, also occur in public places; at one time these would have been the *qargich*, but are now the churches.²⁶ The food is provided by the whaling captains, the distributors are male/female pairs who have been chosen by the deacons, but the distribution-and-feast pattern itself remains the same. In the evening, everyone repairs to the community centre for 'Eskimo dancing' which will be broadcast over the entire North Slope by the local radio station, complete with running commentary by one of Barrow's elders.

25. My niece was visiting me during the spring of 1987 and had the opportunity to participate in both Wainwright and Barrow Naluktaq feasts. Although we explained that she would be in town only for a day or two, she was firmly given shares in both places.

26. Thanksgiving and Christmas are of course not indigenous to the North Slope. They were, however, allowed by the missionaries and are celebrated at the same time of year, i.e., during the darkest period, that was traditionally marked by much ceremonial feasting.



Figure 7.5 'Blanket toss', Barrow Nalukataq, 1985. After the main feast, adults gather around a 'blanket' sewn from walrus or bearded seal skin. As people pull simultaneously, the blanket acts as a trampoline, tossing jumpers high into the air. Those who are skilled carve dramatic poses in the air. At some point, one of the crew members will climb on the blanket carrying sweets which s/he will throw to the assembled crowd. It is one of the last gifts of the day. [*location: p. 203 – end of description of dance*].





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Figure 7.6 'Eskimo Dance', Barrow Nalukataq, 1985. The final event of any Nalukataq feast is the dancing. The walrus hide 'blanket' has been spread in front of the musicians to form a platform for the dancers. These will come from the audience, including first whaling crew members and subsequently anyone from the community who wishes to celebrate the successful whaling season.



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Conclusions

Among Iñupiat, work is something that men and women do for each other. Their interdependence is acknowledged and appreciated. The sexual division of labour is culturally constructed as one in which all participants have crucial responsibilities.

'Real work', like 'real food', is connected to hunting. Although this work is marked by gender, the space in which it occurs is not: the tundra, the ice, domestic and communal spaces in town were customarily all accessible to men and women even if their gendered use might differ. Today the inter-gendered use of space continues. There were no areas to my knowledge that were considered somehow 'off-limits' either to men or to women. The intensity of interaction between them has intensified according to some. Supermarkets as well as feasts, basketball games, public meetings and church services are all attended by men and women, frequently as married couples. At public hearings, men and women testify very much as individuals and may contradict the position of a spouse without exciting comment (no politicians' wives here, instructed to gaze lovingly at their husbands when the latter speak in public).²⁷

The above are not necessarily ritualised spaces, which are more defined by context than physical location and which therefore may be created anywhere. Space may also be ritualised on the tundra and the ice – where the hunter must treat the animal carcass and its *iñua* properly and where the marital relationship truly begins. It is ritualised in the house where animals are shared and their skins are sewn into pleasing patterns. Although women no longer go out to hunt in the western sense as frequently, they do continue to butcher, to sew and to share – i.e. ritual action that is contained in 'hunting' in the Iñupiaq sense. These spaces include sites that are explicitly recognised as communal: special places on the shore, in the *qargich*, the gymnasium, the churches. Ritual activity within all of these spaces depends on gendered *interdependence*; ritual efficacy cannot be achieved by one gender alone. Within the kinship sphere, however, ritual does not have to be performed together. As long as husbands and wives do what they are supposed to do, their marital/ritual obligations are met and, indeed, many married couples spend much of the day in separate activities. In contrast, ritualised

27. This is, I am sorry to say, part of the US Republican candidates' handbook.

spaces that serve the community are not only marked by gendered interdependence, but by gendered *interaction*. To go to the spirit world – *Itivyaat* – one needs a spouse. To share the whale meat and thus act as good hosts, the whaling couple need male/female pairs to help with the distribution. To thank the animals during *ag̃gi* – Eskimo dancing – men must drum and women sing. The dances which show thanks may be individual, groups of men or women, or men, women and children together. The final dance of the evening (which is called the welcome dance), should include everyone. It is precisely in the public sphere that the interdependence of men's and women's roles receives the greatest elaboration.

The public/community sphere for Iñupiat, then, is a realm that is ceremonially elaborated. It is culturally constructed as important, but animals, not gender, mark its boundaries. Those animals classified as communal resources belong to the public realm where both men and women must act correctly to maintain the proper relationship between animal and human worlds.

The woman is indeed associated with the hearth, but it is here that she attracts the whale, the animal most bound up with community. It is not any woman, but the whaling captain-wife, in the whaling captain-house, working as the ritual co-head of the whaling crew. She must do this in conjunction with the work of her husband at their whaling camp. In earlier times, he would have worn her belt and kept one of her mittens, just as she would have kept his drum by the door. Today their connection is maintained by virtually constant communication by short-wave radio.

Sewing is skilled labour which, if you are a man out on the tundra may keep you alive; if you are a woman, it may earn you shares from other hunters, or money from itinerant whites. When a woman sews for her husband, her needle creating a second skin to attract the animals, she is acting ritually as wife-the-hunter. It is the ritual, not the labour, that is gendered. And it is the context, not the activity, that creates the ritual. It is the shared ideology that makes this 'public'. The conjunction of ideology (the equation of women's ritual with hunting) and practice (women's ability to earn shares with their labour and their role in distribution) places women at the centre of socially productive relations, not on the periphery as reproducers. They have remained at the centre.

This material suggests that Engels was correct to argue that a sexual division of labour does not in and of itself constitute a sys-

tem of gender exploitation. It is a critical flaw, however, to assume that such a division genders space as well as labour and it is precisely that point on which the remainder of Engels' logic rests. One could argue that it is the gendering of space – whether mental or physical – that creates exclusion from which difference leads to differential evaluation. The fact that space is thus gendered in many societies is uncontestable. It cannot be taken as a given.

The Iñupiaq construction of the social relations of production has, I think, had important ramifications for the ways Iñupiat have dealt with the economic changes of recent decades. This, in turn, has important implications for models of social relations within a capitalist context. I suggested earlier that women's control over their labour has perhaps allowed them to move more easily into waged labour than has often been women's experience elsewhere. In fact, it is sometimes thought by Iñupiat to have been an easier move for women than for men. Here the spatial context of gendered ritual may be a factor. Waged work has neither been classified as a male domain, nor as somehow more real or intrinsically valuable than hunting, which continues to be defined as 'real work' – the work of maintaining proper animal/human relations. Men must go out on the tundra or the ice to hunt. Earning money is needed for survival, but it conflicts with what men have to do to fulfil their ritual responsibilities to the animals and to their fellow humans. Women, whose ritual work (sewing and butchering) is not restricted spatially, can more easily accommodate 'real work' and jobs.

I suggest as well that gender-neutral ideas about knowledge likewise provide access to the public sphere. Leadership positions such as *umialik*, or *angatkuq* have long been associated with skills and knowledge, neither of which is gendered in the 'natural' idiom of Euroamerican models. Frankson's grandmother possessed shamanic knowledge and was sent 'to the other side' to procure animals. Today a woman with specialist political knowledge may be sent to the legislature to represent Iñupiaq interests.

It seems most useful to argue, not, as Rosaldo might, that the boundaries between public and private are blurred, nor that gender differences are unmarked. On the North Slope, unlike many hunting and gathering societies, an entire complex of social activities has developed around whaling which is explicitly community – not kinship – oriented. All animals must be treated correctly

– the very acts of hunting, butchering, sewing are ritual which should be conducted by husbands and wives. The shares of a bearded seal, or a caribou are earned by participants in the hunt. Most of the meat that will subsequently circulate through sharing-networks will travel to kin who are involved in a series of intensive reciprocities. Some will be shared with 'the people', people in need, people who ask, but the decision of what and how much to share is made at the household level by the marital couple.

With whaling these rituals are brought out of the kinship sphere, onto the beach, into the *qargich*. Here the whaling couple – symbolizing the marital relationship as linking humans and animals – act as ritual husband and wife, representatives of the whole community in their role of 'good hosts'. The other crucial actors are men and women. Gender, then, is important; it is marked by the different things that men and women do. It does not mark the communal sphere which may be clearly separated from the kinship sphere, but is rather incorporated into it. Whales, not men, 'make' community.

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