Multiplexity in food sharing and cooperative networks: Implications for household vulnerability in the Alaskan North.

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Abstract

Ongoing climatic and economic change in northern Alaska increasingly represent sources of uncertainty for household livelihoods. Theory and ethnography suggest that food sharing and cooperative behaviors have acted historically to spread risk and mediate scarcity in the Arctic. Here we seek to understand the current role of sharing and cooperation for offsetting the vulnerability of households engaged in mixed subsistence-cash economies. Data represent kinship, socio-economic activities of households and valued flows of subsistence foods, equipment and labor, based on own and cooperative hunting and sharing relationships through 3 complete village networks - in two coastal Inupiaq communities and one interior Gwitch’in community. Multiplexity (e.g. household nodes have ties to more than one network) is used as a framework to explore structures of centrality and modularity within the data. Are particular households central across all species and resource networks or do households specialize in hunting of particular species, and receive other important food resources through sharing, or are households generalists who hunt across a wide variety of species for needed subsistence food? Results will help to highlight the strengths and limitations of sharing and cooperative relationships to contribute to arctic livelihoods under conditions of change.

Keywords: arctic, social networks, food sharing, multiplexity

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