Sharing in an Egalitarian Kalahari Community

Susan Kent

Man, New Series, Volume 28, Issue 3 (Sep., 1993), 479-514.

SHARING IN AN EGALITARIAN KALAHARI COMMUNITY

SUSAN KENT
Old Dominion University

Sharing, a well known characteristic of many forager societies, is often thought to mitigate the unevenness of hunting returns. From this perspective, sharing is primarily economic in nature. Although there might be an economic component behind sharing patterns, I suggest that the fostering of social networks is more important. This proposition is assessed through the detailed examination of the sharing patterns in 1990 of five families located at Kutse, a recently sedentary community in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana. These observations are contrasted with data collected from other field seasons at Kutse between 1987 and 1991.

If it were not for the all-important sharing networks, which go beyond the sharing of food, this society could not maintain an ambience of egalitarianism, particularly in regard to the outcome of specific activities, such as hunting, which are known to be based on unequal abilities. Using case studies of gender relations and meat sharing, I show that sharing within a strongly egalitarian society reinforces social bonds and perpetuates a perception of equality.

Introduction

> Indeed, while food production is usually discussed in great detail, there is often a frustrating lack of data ... when it comes to food transactions. I think this is due in part to the tendency to view such transactions entirely in economic terms. Since they have little bearing on people's actual rates of consumption, the details of who gives to whom, and in what order, are left out. In fact, however, highly significant political statements are made in each wave of distribution. In the act of meat distribution, most of these hunting and gathering societies represent the social whole as being internally differentiated according to gender and generation. But it is significant that these are relationships between social categories, not between specific individuals (Gibson 1988: 178).

Sharing has been studied in detail among foraging societies, partly because it is a prominent characteristic of such groups, particularly in those termed 'assertedly egalitarian' (Woodburn 1982). Most anthropologists link sharing in one way or another to economics – e.g., sharing reduces the risk of hunting return variation and/or deleterious environmental conditions among individuals or groups (Binford in prep.; Cashdan 1980; Hames 1990; Gould 1982; Kaplan & Hill 1985; Hawkes & O'Connell 1992; Kaplan *et al.* 1990; Smith 1988; 1991; Wiessner 1982*a*; 1982*b*; Winterhalder 1986; 1990). For instance, Hawkes's (1991: 30) claims that 'For resources which are taken unpredictably but in large packages, reciprocal sharing among families would result over time in lower daily variation and higher daily average amounts of food for a sharer's spouse and children.' This view of sharing is probably the most popular among anthropologists, especially those in North America. Some anthropologists attribute sharing to attracting

sexual access, thereby increasing offspring survival (Hill 1983). This combines with other material favours that encourage men to 'show off' in terms of acquiring meat and sharing it widely (Hawkes 1991; also see Hill 1983).

While perhaps true under some conditions and/or in some societies, the cross-cultural applicability of these economic and/or fitness models has not yet been established. Why should sharing be used to maximize fitness or to reduce risk and hunting variability when there are other mechanisms that would better accomplish such goals? To maximize fitness or reduce risk, for instance, a society could encourage the most skilful hunter to hunt more hours, or allot more prestige to hunters who bring in more meat. To increase an individual hunter's amount of available meat, those who are successful could choose to share only with each other. None of the societies I regard as strongly egalitarian practises these methods. I link the pervasiveness and kind of sharing characteristic of these societies to the way in which a society is integrated.

Egalitarianism permeates most aspects of groups which might be called 'staunchly egalitarian', including their politics, economics, gender relations and social organization, as has been described for two groups of Basarwa ('Bushmen', San) – the !Kung (Lee 1979 and elsewhere; Draper 1975; L. Marshall 1976; and others) and the G/wi (Silberbauer 1981). If it were not for the all-important sharing networks that extend beyond the sharing of food, these societies could not maintain their facade of egalitarianism (a facade because hunting success, as one example, is not equal between hunters). Without sharing, egalitarianism would be particularly difficult to achieve in regard to the outcome of specific activities, such as hunting, which are known to be based on unequal, often innate, abilities, like eyesight, or on skills acquired through training or experience. Sharing also solidifies social bonds that unite nuclear families into consolidated social wholes in ways that clans, age sets, or special associations do in tribal or other more complex societies. Ingold (1988: 283) writes, from a slightly different perspective, that 'sharing is equivalent to integration through face-to-face relationships' (also see Ingold 1987). In other words, sharing perpetuates social bonds.

In more stratified societies social roles are organized by gender, age and/or status, often in a hierarchical order, while in highly non-stratified societies social roles are organized by the *absence* of rigid status, age, or gender differentiation; that is, by egalitarianism. The motive for the type and pervasiveness of sharing in the societies on which I am focusing is this fiercely egalitarian ethic. Egalitarianism in social relations can be seen in the flexibility of social roles.

Egalitarianism is a continuum, not an absolute entity; societies are only more or less egalitarian. Because it is a continuum, I restrict my comments to those societies that have been characterized as strongly or assertedly egalitarian, representing the extreme as we know it today (i.e., most immediate-return foragers, Woodburn 1982). I do not include stratified, hierarchical hunter-gatherers, such as the Northwest Coast Indians, or groups like the Inuit who have hunting leaders, an example of stratification not found in all forager societies. Although sharing among forager societies has been extensively discussed in the literature (Binford 1978; 1984; Bird-David 1992; Cashdan 1985; Endicott 1979; Ingold 1987; Lee 1988: 281-3; Smith & Boyd 1990; Winterhalder 1990; Woodburn

1982; 1988), this article does not review such discussions, except as they pertain directly to sharing and its consequences at Kutse, a particular Kalahari community.

In order to examine sharing at Kutse, it is necessary to demonstrate the pervasiveness of egalitarianism there (the alternative spelling of Khutse is used here to differentiate the Khutse Game Reserve from the Kutse community). The need to establish the magnitude of egalitarianism at Kutse derives from the fact that sharing in less egalitarian societies than Kutse may differ in motivation and/or consequence. The rest of the article discusses how sharing articulates with and reinforces that egalitarianism. First I provide some background information.

Kutse: a recently sedentary Kalahari community

The Kutse community, located at a very small pan just outside the Khutse Game Reserve, has been discussed elsewhere and is therefore only briefly described here (see Kent 1989*a*; 1991; 1992; Kent & Dunn 1993). Approximately 70 to 80 per cent. of the dispersed settlement is composed of G/wi, G//ana, and Kūa Basarwa; the rest are Bakgalagadi Bantu-speakers. Average population figures range from approximately 90 to 130 persons, but fluctuate greatly depending on season and other factors. Equally variable is the number of camps occupied at any one time; the range is from around ten to thirty individual camps. Camps vary considerably in size, from one to thirty people[1]. Membership can include friends, nuclear or extended families, or more distant relatives. Length of camp occupation ranges from weeks to years, though two to three years is most common.

Most of both ethnic groups originally came from the nearby Central Kalahari Game Reserve where they maintain close ties with relatives (fig. 1).[2] Kutse residents are linguistically and culturally different from the better known !Kung. Central Kalahari Basarwa follow different settlement patterns and they do not have *hxaro*, special namesake relationships, among other differences (Kent 1992). *Hxaro* is a formal relationship between separate !Kung (or Nharo) bands (see Barnard 1992; Wiessner 1977). Unlike the intra-band sharing that occurs at Kutse, I believe *hxaro* is more properly seen as a reciprocal economic exchange between bands. It is a form of trade wherein objects are exchanged for subsistence security should the area inhabited by the band be unable to support it. Sharing networks in the Central Kalahari, or 'cliques' as Silberbauer calls them, represent intra-band sharing within a territory, rather than inter-band exchange between territories as occurs in *hxaro* (also see Discussion below).

As the term is employed at Kutse, the 'owner' of Kutse is the first individual to have come to the area, a Mokgalagadi[3] who has been dead for a number of years, but who occupied the area before the Basarwa arrived. The son of the original 'owner' is recognized by some as the current 'owner' of Kutse. This individual has no additional status or political power, nor had his father during his lifetime. Etiquette requires that people ask the son for permission to settle at Kutse, but as noted by other anthropologists who have worked in the Central Kalahari, this is merely a formality (Silberbauer 1981). The ownership position is not hereditary in the Central Kalahari and it appears to be much less formal than among the !Kung (see Silberbauer 1981: 141-42).

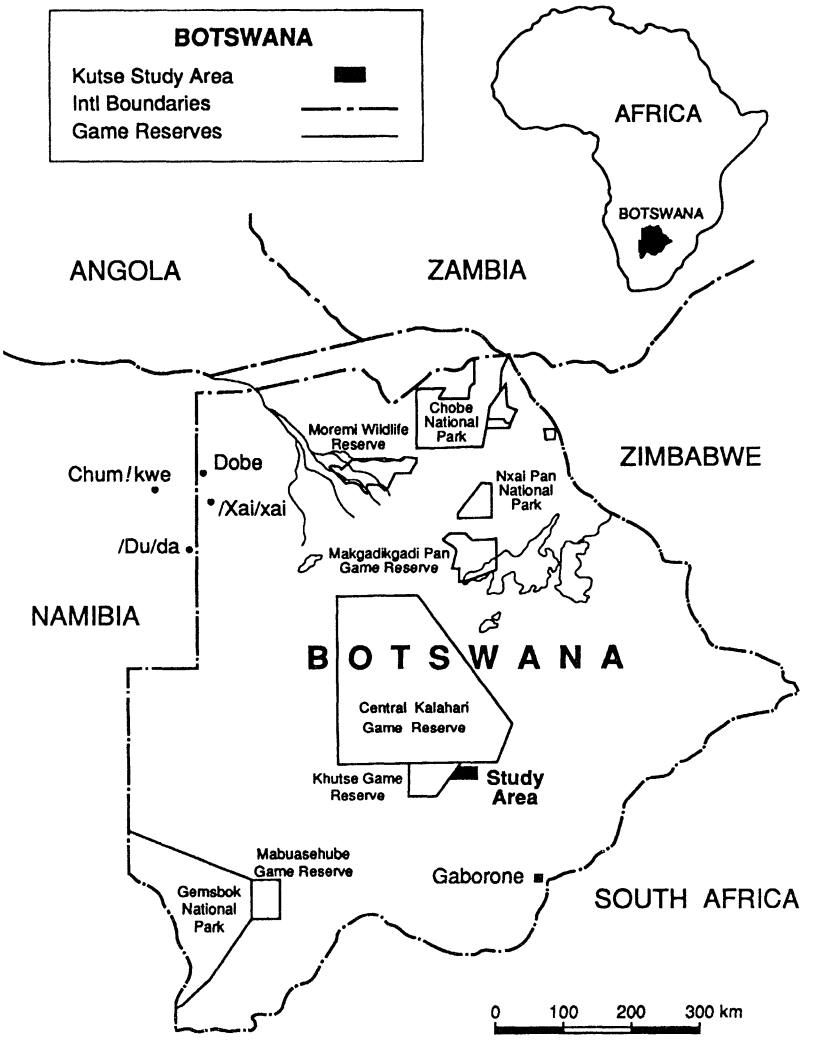

FIGURE 1 Map showing study area.

Despite differences in dialect, most people consider themselves as belonging to the Kutse community just as they had formerly perceived themselves as belonging to a territory or pan (such as ≠Kade pan, Silberbauer 1981). For example, one resident, speaking in Sekgalagadi, claimed that he was 'BaKutse', much as one would claim that one was Ba-G/wi or Ba-Kgalagadi ('Ba' is the Bantu language prefix meaning 'people of ' and G/wi and Kgalagadi are different ethnic groups and languages). Other informants have told me that all people at Kutse are related in some way, even if they cannot establish actual genealogical links. Because of the universal kin system (Barnard 1978), residents even consider people who speak different dialects to be distantly related; i.e., non-related friends at Kutse are incorporated into the kin system.

Camps at Kutse consist of huts and/or windbreaks. There are a few families who still abandon their camp every six months or so, but they usually build their new camps at locations within the dispersed Kutse community, rather than leaving the area as they traditionally would have done.

There is much interaction between camps, but particularly for those whose members belong to the same sharing network. Camps inhabited by people who belong to a common sharing network tend to be located near one another. People within a sharing network often eat together, hunt or gather together, care for goats together, babysit young children as a group, or spend an entire day at one of their partner's camps. That is, people who belong to a sharing network spend more time together than they spend with people outside their sharing network. Camps occupied by Hunters 1, 3 and 5 and their families form a sharing network or 'clique'.

In contrast, Hunter 2 and his family form a sharing isolate – that is, they do not regularly formally share with other Kutse residents, although they do occasionally informally share. The people who inhabit the isolated camps (they are of the same family but use different camps in different years) are unusual in that they socialize with others in the community less often than do other families. Hunter 2 and his family are a self-contained group. The family members enjoy talking and being with one another. They tend to be less boisterous than most families and prefer to sit in camp by themselves rather than with others at someone else's camp. They also do not share their food or possessions as much as do others at Kutse. Most sharing that does occur with members of the isolate is in the form of informal sharing through which a person obtains food by being at the hearth when meat or other food is consumed. Non-membership in a social network does not mean that the isolated family is in conflict with other families in the community. There is no hostility between the isolate and those residents who are part of a sharing network, though being a sharing isolate does result in less social interaction, which most people see as essential for a happy and satisfying life. So, while other residents are friendly with Hunter 2 and his family, and there are no difficulties or fights between them, members of sharing networks simply do not visit Hunter 2's family as often as they do the camps of others.

Thus, almost by definition, a sharing isolate at Kutse is a social isolate. While social solidarity may be necessary for group or social survival, it is unnecessary for an individual family's physical survival, particularly since sharing is not economically based. In other words, without sharing, a family can survive and even thrive economically. For example, except during the drought of 1987, Hunter 2 is a comparatively successful hunter (see table 1).[4] With the assistance of his wife, he is able to feed his family. Moreover, my 1988 inventory of material possessions in Kutse revealed Hunter 2's family to be fairly well off compared to others. That Hunter 2's family can survive economically is one indication that sharing is not an economic necessity (see below for other indications). At the same time, the fact that Hunter 2's family has fewer close friends, has fewer visitors and makes fewer visits to other camps, all indicate that sharing does affect social relations.

While isolates can economically provision themselves, indicating that sharing is not mandatory for economic survival, Hunter 2 and his family do still participate in informal sharing, but at a lower frequency than others. They

consequently do not live in a complete social vacuum. That is, the isolate cannot socially exist at Kutse without maintaining at least a very minimal level of sharing/social ties. They do this by, for example, participating in community decisions (e.g., Kent 1989*a*). These decisions are made by consensus from meetings attended by individuals from most camps, including the sharing isolates.

TABLE 1. Hunting success, and hours per week spent foraging and herding (modified from Kent n.d.*b*).

Observation Period	*Hunter*	*Season*	*Year*	*Foraging Hours/ week*	*Tending Goats Hours/week*	*Hunting Success (success/ attempt)*
1	Hunter 1★	Dry	1987	17.68	0.00	20.0%
2	Hunter 2	Dry	1987	14.76	3.79	14.3%
3	Hunter 3★	Dry	1988	14.52	0.00	50.0%
4	Hunter 2	Dry	1988	2.29	2.68	50.0%
5	Hunter 4	Dry	1989	24.65	1.74	33.3%
6	Hunter 2	Dry	1989	22.26	2.29	60.0%
7	Hunter 2	Wet	1989	24.57	3.46	75.0%
8	Hunter 5★	Dry	1990	19.94	1.95	36.6%
9	Hunter 2	Dry	1990	18.53	-[a]	35.7%
10	Hunter 1★	Dry	1990	20.34	0.00	18.8%
11	Hunter 2	Dry	1991	19.25	3.05	42.7%
12	Hunter 5★	Dry	1991	12.31	1.91	30.4%
13	Hunter 6★	Dry	1991	21.45	0.00	29.4%

[a] For a variety of reasons, this figure could not be calculated.
★ Belong in the same sharing network.

The major means of acquiring meat at Kutse is through hunting. Hunting weapons include spears, bows and poisoned arrows, traps, dogs and clubs; no one owns or has access to a gun. Unlike elsewhere in the Kalahari, equestrian hunting is not practised because no one owns a horse (unlike ≠Kade, see Osaki 1990). When government drought relief foods were available (pre-1991), wild plants were an important secondary source of vegetables. However, when government rations are not available, wild plants become the primary vegetable source.

Some individuals maintain small goat herds, but because most people own fewer than forty head, goats are rarely slaughtered (approximately 90-95 per cent. of all meat comes from wild sources; Kent 1992). Kutse residents say that they keep goats as a backup food source should the men be unsuccessful in hunting; goats are a source of meat over which they have more control than they have over wild animals (Kent n.d.*a*). Most years during my observations, goat herding has not been an important subsistence endeavour either in terms of time invested or in terms of resource yield (Kent 1992; n.d.*a*). The same is true for gardening. Melons constitute the primary cultivated crop, although the number of families who plant gardens varies each year from none to only a few. Harvest yields also vary greatly; most years gardens provide few to no melons because of the irregularity of the rains and the destruction of crops by both wild and domesticated animals.

There are no salaried positions or shops at Kutse, although a very small amount of money is earned by selling curios to occasional tourists. While definitely not Stone Age hunter-gatherers by any means, the Kutse inhabitants can be characterized as primarily, though not exclusively, foragers (Kent 1992; n.d.*a*).

Sharing at Kutse: the data

At Kutse I have conducted participant-observation, interview and time allocation studies during the dry seasons between 1987 and 1991 and during the rainy season of 1989-90. All adult residents have been interviewed about different topics at different points in the research.[5] This article is based on data that include 369 observation days (291 actual days of fieldwork), during which time I recorded over 219 hunting trips and the sharing of more than 94 animals acquired through hunting (not including animals brought in to camp through sharing). Furthermore, a 1990 inventory of all surface bones provides an indication of the meat consumption and sharing that occurs during the part of the year I am not present (a total of 3,588 surface bones were inventoried). Hunting success rates and the amount of meat acquired during thirteen episodes of continuous observations (ranging from eight days to fifty days) were recorded during 1987-91. All hunting trips, hunting yields, food consumption and sharing of food and other objects were recorded.

Three camps that form a sharing network (Hunters 1, 3, and 5's camps) provided the focus for a specific study of sharing in 1990. Although the vast majority of families at Kutse belong to a sharing network, network composition varies considerably and there are some networks which do not overlap with others. Silberbauer (1981: 166) defined sharing networks as having 'no apparent structural determinant of membership. Cliques [what is referred to here as sharing networks] consist of a seemingly random range of kin and friends of all ages.... The only criterion of membership I could discover was that, for the duration of the clique, the members had a preference for one another's company'. He also noted that the 'clique ... is a cohesive group within which there is a high rate of communication, shared preferences of company and a common interest in cooperative tasks. The high rate of circulation of goods and services creates and reflects a network of reciprocal obligations' (Silberbauer 1981: 167).

Egalitarianism at Kutse

Before discussing the relationship between egalitarianism and sharing, the presence of strong egalitarianism at Kutse must be demonstrated. This is because, as noted above, sharing might not be carried out for the same reasons in less egalitarian societies where it may be used to intimidate, impress or obligate; moreover, sharing can have different consequences in egalitarian and non-egalitarian societies.

At Kutse, there are no community-wide, formally recognized political or social leaders, nor any centralized authority figures (see Kent 1989*a*). Most people, though not all, recognize the authority of the Mokgalagadi chief from Salajwe, a village located an hour and a half's drive away. He is considered a remote figure and his opinion is rarely sought by Kutse residents. They are also cognizant of the government police who occasionally drive by the settlement (usually Batswana

from the village of Molepolole located about four or five hours' drive away). The police seldom interact with community members. Residents are also aware that outside government officials have designated a local Mokgalagadi as a spokesperson or 'chief' in order to have one person who they believe can speak for the entire community (Kent 1989*a*). However, over 75 per cent. of sixty-two people interviewed did not mention his name when asked whom they would consult if they had a problem that could not be solved within the family; an even larger number did not see him as a chief or a political leader/authority. Moreover, his social status in the community is not particularly higher than others of his age.

No one at Kutse leads hunting or collecting trips, which are usually spontaneously organized. When people feel like hunting or gathering, they will mention it. If others feel like joining them, they will; otherwise, they go by themselves. If, when on a group hunt, one or more persons want to return to camp while others want to continue, the group will split, with people going their separate ways.

Often several families share labour by combining goat herds, making the herds appear larger when in fact the animals belong to different people throughout Kutse. Stock is one of the few possessions that is unequally distributed and is one of the few areas in which the community is not completely egalitarian (e.g. 59 per cent. of fifty-three Basarwa interviewed do not own any livestock). It is interesting that this is *not* acknowledged by most residents during interviews or casual conversation. In fact, I overheard two men, both of whom own some goats that they herd collectively, sit together and complain to each other that it is most unfortunate that they do not own any goats and the other sadly agreeing with him!

Residents also deny that any of them own more possessions than others; although not true, this attitude is reinforced by the pervasive ethos of sharing. In reality, some individuals do own more, including donkeys (which are commonly shared). A study of the number of objects located at Kutse camps shows that occupants who plan to stay at a camp for a long period have more objects than do those who plan to stay for shorter periods (Kent 1993*a*).[6] In other words, variation in the number of possessions between camps is not related to family wealth at Kutse, although it probably is in other communities. At Kutse, everyone, including those who plan a short occupation and those who plan a long one, and regardless of ethnic affiliation, has equal access to a refuse pit used by tourists to deposit their exotic trash at the game reserve camp (Kent 1993*a*). Residents transform the refuse into everyday tools, including tin can pots and scrapers, glass and plastic containers, etc. Concerning these possessions, people claim there is an economic egalitarianism that empirically does not exist.

Gender equality at Kutse. Gender roles differ greatly between societies. However, according to Leacock (1978: 248):

> Since these reified concepts [of sex roles] are derived from our own culture, it is no accident that hierarchical patterns similar to our own are found to be 'incipient' wherever they are not well established. ... Fundamental qualitative distinctions between egalitarian and class societies are lost. A hierarchical view of sex roles fits easily into the scheme. That sex roles exist is, after all, a human universal, and to assume that any difference between the sexes necessarily involves hierarchy is seen, not as ethnocentrism [which is what it really is], but as common sense.

Obviously, differences between males and females are recognized by all societies. What varies is both the emphasis placed on and the attitude toward those differences (Kent 1984; 1991). In many societies males and females are ranked, with one being hierarchically above the other (see Begler 1978). This simply does not occur at Kutse.

Because the amount of egalitarianism in any society is not an absolute but is implicitly compared to other societies on a continuum from more to less, it is useful to compare the egalitarianism of the Kutse community to Western society. I choose Western society, not because Westerners are the archetypal highly stratified and hierarchical society, but because I have conducted fieldwork among Euroamericans on the topic (e.g., Kent 1984; 1985; 1991). The comparison emphasizes the nature of egalitarianism as a continuum.

Gender egalitarianism, or equality of males and females, at Kutse is visible in a number of arenas. For instance, although there is a strong cultural ideal of pacifism, as noted for other Basarwa groups in the past, such as the !Kung (L. Marshall 1976; Lee 1979), today fighting is common due to a settled lifestyle, aggregation and the lack of a formal arbitrator to mediate disputes (see Kent 1989*a*; also see Draper 1992). Both men and women participate in fights, including spouses, siblings, friends, and parents and children. At Kutse, men hit men or women and vice versa. Male-female fights are not necessarily between spouses; many are between lovers or friends. One gang beating of an individual who was a constant source of fighting included both males and females, although women played a secondary role (Kent 1989*a*). Fights between women are not uncommon; in fact, fights between women are almost as frequent as fights between men and women. Moreover, women initiate fights about as often as men. In contrast, Western women are taught that it is inappropriate (i.e., unfeminine) physically to fight either males or females. The only exception I have observed at Kutse is that no one, regardless of sex, should hit a pregnant woman.

While males in Western society often hit females in an attempt to intimidate and/or dominate them (Frieze & Browne 1989), I suggest that at Kutse men hit women for reasons similar to those for hitting other men.[7] In other words, whereas violence may produce the same end-result, the cause varies between a non-egalitarian society, such as America, and a strongly egalitarian society, such as Kutse. Leacock (1978: 251) also noted a fundamental difference in violence against women in egalitarian and non-egalitarian societies when she wrote that 'such quarrels are not, as they may first appear, structurally at the same level as similar quarrels in our society'. That is, most Western men physically hit women as a demonstration of their physical dominance, which translates into social/political/economic domination (Frieze & Browne 1989). This domination of one sex over another is a feature of highly complex, stratified and hierarchical societies, but not of Kutse. After a fight with a man, a woman does not necessarily acquiesce to his will, a criterion used by Begler (1978: 583-4) to denote gender equality. At Kutse, then, men physically fight women because they do not classify them as a separate category to the same extent that Westerners do, although of course they recognize basic biological differences.

An anecdotal example of sexual equality occurred when I casually mentioned to my Mosarwa field assistant that men need to eat more than women (a

common belief among Westerners). My field assistant was clearly puzzled. He could not imagine why either sex would need more or less food than the other (in contrast, of eighty-seven American university-affiliated persons, 77 per cent. of women and 57 per cent. of men said they had heard that males need more food than females; Kent 1993*b*).

Another example stems from the responses of Kutse residents to my question: if you can have only one child, would you prefer a daughter or a son and why? Only two interviewees out of thirty-one (7 per cent.) would rather have a son and an equal number, 7 per cent., would prefer a daughter. The vast majority, 87 per cent., said the sex of the child did not matter.[8] In fact, they regard the idea that someone might have a preference as odd. A logistical regression reveals that there is no significant difference in responses between the two ethnic groups residing at Kutse ($p=0.6221$), or between the sexes ($p=0.9449$). This makes an interesting contrast to the answers from sixty-five American university students, most of whom were raised in a non-egalitarian society and to whom I asked the same question. While 87 per cent. of the Kutse interviewees stated that the gender of the child did not matter, only 11 per cent. of the American students stated that they had no gender preference ($p=0.0001$; 80 per cent. of the males preferred a son and 11 per cent. preferred a daughter; 60 per cent. of the females preferred a daughter and 30 per cent. preferred a son; Kent 1993*b*). Moreover, and consistent with the interviews, I have not detected any parental investment patterns or other behaviour at Kutse that would indicate one sex was preferentially treated over another (unlike that reported by Cronk 1991; see endnote 8).

Other questions exploring gender relations at Kutse included asking interviewees if they would rather be male or female. The majority of interviewees also

FIGURE 2. Painted faces of husband and wife from hunting ritual performed so that animals will be caught in their individual traps.

found this question odd. Informants said they could not change their sex so why consider such a question. When I persisted, most informants replied that it did not matter whether they were male or female.[9]

Material culture at Kutse, unlike that in highly stratified societies, is not gender-linked, even at camps where occupants have lived for several years (i.e., although sedentary residents have an increased number of goods than more mobile ones, there is no gender segregation of these objects). Tools are not gender-specific because gender differences generally are not emphasized. A digging stick is no more a 'woman's' tool than it is a 'man's' tool – both sexes use it in a variety of ways, as walking stick, hunting club, or pestle. Even the hunting bow is not task- or gender-specific in its use. Both men and women use the bow as a musical instrument by putting one end in their mouth and plucking the string at the other end.[10]

Only hunting bags and arrows are exclusively associated with males. Spears are technically associated with hunting and males, but are multipurpose in function and non-sex specific in use almost without exception. Women use their husband's spears for a wide range of tasks, from stirring porridge to cutting a piece of hide or trimming their toenails. The absence of gender-specific objects is also reflected in the fact that men and women do not keep their belongings in separate containers.

A few activities are considered to be more in the male or the female domain; however, there is great flexibility within these categories and there is no stigma when boundaries are crossed. For example, at a dance men usually dance and women sing. However, it is not uncommon for men to sing or for women to dance for short periods. Although gathering wild plants is a task often associated with women, it is not exclusively so and a hunter rarely returns, whether successful or not, without at least one wild plant of some kind. Women do not hunt with bows and arrows (reasons vary widely from lack of knowledge, to not having the interest or 'bravery' to do so). However, hunting is not exclusively a male activity; women kill small animals by using snares or the digging stick as a club.

A specific example which occurred during the dry season of 1991 illustrates this point. While sitting at her windbreak hearth with her husband and several sharing partners, a woman grabbed her husband's bow and arrows and shot at a springbok walking through the camp. Her husband had refused to shoot at it because he was convinced it would bolt before he could stalk it. His wife missed the animal, although everyone, including the woman herself, had a great laugh about it. No stigma was attached to the woman for handling her husband's bow and arrows or for attempting to shoot the springbok, though people predicted failure due to the difficulties of stalking the animal without sufficient brush cover in camp.

Women routinely make and set bird snares. If their husbands are away, women also check their husbands' traps and butcher any animals caught. After 1988, when the idea of using plastic threads from mealie meal bags to make snares for traps was introduced to Kutse, women began weaving snares which their husbands or lovers put up in brush traps.[11] Any animals caught in the snares belong to the women. In 1992, the husband of a woman who had steenbok/duiker traps

set, performed a ritual believed to encourage god to allow the capture of an animal in the trap first for his wife and then for himself: he cut his wife's and his own arms, chest and face and then rubbed a special black plant-blood mixture in the wounds (fig. 2). The ritual is generally considered by anthropologists to be gender-specific, because hunting and trapping are usually thought to be solely conducted by males. However, the adoption of novel snares made out of plastic threads has changed that tradition. This suggests that in the past the ritual was solely a male activity only because women did not make steenbok-duiker snares from wild plants, and not because women could not participate in the ritual in the same way or for the same purposes as a man.

Some husbands and wives forage together, both collecting wild plants and checking traps. Women often assist men in butchering animals. It is not unusual for women to butcher animals by themselves. Smaller species, such as mongoose, squirrels or birds, are routinely butchered by women. Husbands customarily consult their wives concerning the distribution of meat (among Nharo Basarwa, women 'also distribute the meat brought home by the men' Guenther 1983-4: 13). Both males and females cook, wash pots or dishes, and care for children, although women more often perform these tasks. Some women assist in tanning hides and making most objects except for bows and arrows, spears and hunting bags, for which they do not have the necessary skills. Children under five years of age usually wear the genital coverings appropriate for their sex, if they wear anything at all. Occasionally young boys wear girls' aprons and little girls wear boys' penis coverings. When questioned about this, their mothers were amused that I had noticed; they did not find it a particularly worthwhile topic of conversation and attached no significance to a young boy wearing a girl's covering or the converse.

Generally, the differences between the sexes are obvious and are perceived by all at Kutse – people do differentiate between men and women. For example, men are considered to be braver than women, a menstruating woman cannot touch a man or his hunting gear, and women are more susceptible to invisible arrows shot by Ga//amama, a lesser or evil god (for the latter, see Barnard 1992: 115). However, these differences are limited by the considerable overlap and flexibility in gender roles. In general, the differences between men and women are not emphasized as much as in other societies, because Kutse residents do not arrange the sexes hierarchically. One Mosarwa male stated that 'there is no job just for women; men help women'. Males are not thought to be superior to females or females to males. Egalitarianism among the sexes reflects the egalitarianism in the political, social and economic spheres of the society.

Their newly sedentary lifestyle has not altered the Kutse residents' fiercely egalitarian way of life. This differs from Draper's (1975) observations of major changes in !Kung women's status as a result of becoming sedentary. The difference is probably due to the economic changes which accompanied the !Kung's transition to a settled lifestyle (i.e., their work for Bantu-speakers or dependence on resources obtained from Bantu-speakers; e.g., see Draper 1992; Draper & Kranichfeld 1990). Unlike the !Kung, the Kutse community is not situated at a cattle post and most residents are *not* regularly engaged in labour for Bantu-speakers. Instead, Kutse males and females continue to be primarily, though not

exclusively, hunter-gatherers. This contrast indicates that it is not the fact of being sedentary *per se* that is altering women's egalitarian status with men among the !Kung and Nharo (as described by Draper 1975;1992 and Guenther 1983-84), but the assimilation of new ideas about work and gender from their agro-pastoralist, Bantu-speaking neighbours (Kent 1993*b*).

The egalitarian attitudes of gender depicted here pertain to other non-Kalahari groups who occupy very different environments. Among the Malaysian Batek foragers for instance, Endicott (1979: 64) observed that men and women are not 'separately rewarded socially for their productive efforts. Neither sex gains prestige or status for producing and sharing food – it is expected and predictable behavior. The sharing network cuts across sex lines and does not place separate exchange values on the foods produced by each sex'. As at Kutse, meat is not shared only with males or fellow hunters among the Batek, and vegetable foods are not shared only with females (Endicott 1979: 177). According to Endicott (1979: 178):

> The sharing network treats all food contributions as equal, without regard to the type or amount of food put into the system. Although men and women usually work at complementary food-getting activities, their direct participation in the sharing network means that they derive equal benefit from the system and are not dependent on intermediaries, such as spouses, for their shares of food. The importance of this is that neither sex dominates the exchange of food nor has economic power over the other sex.

It is important to illustrate precisely how sharing operates in highly egalitarian societies. The Kutse data provide one detailed case study.

Meat-sharing networks at Kutse

Meat is perhaps the most frequent item shared and, as such, is important for maintaining sharing relationships. Meat is an integral part of the Kutse diet for reasons not necessarily restricted to its nutritional value (see Kent 1989*b*). People enjoy eating meat (Fiddes 1991). For example, during 1990, the year of the following case study, meat was consumed on 71 per cent. of fourteen continuous days of observation at Hunter 2's household (in 1991, the same family consumed meat on 75 per cent. of the observation days). At Hunter 5's camp, meat was available, either through sharing or through hunting returns, on 83 per cent. of forty-eight continuous observation days (and meat was consumed on 83. per cent. of observation days in 1991). Note that the 1991 figures are very similar to those for 1990 and indicate that 1990 was not an unusual year for a non-drought period. Also note that participation in a sharing partnership does not greatly increase the number of days that meat is eaten, because generally successful hunters give away as well as receive meat (Hunter 2 does not belong to a sharing network whereas Hunter 5 does; Hunter 5 could have eaten more meat, but instead he gave away more than he received; see table 2). It is therefore appropriate to examine in detail the role of meat in sharing networks. Among the !Kung, Marshall observed that although meat is not essential for survival, the '!Kung are quite conscious of the value of meat-sharing and they talk about it, especially *about the mutual obligations it entails*' (1976: 302, emphasis added). Such mutual obligations are an aspect of social relationships, the character of which varies significantly (Gulbrandsen 1991: 88).

TABLE 2. Number of skeletal parts left and brought in through sharing.

Camp	*In*	*Out*	*Net Gain*
Hunter 1's Camp 1990	21	8	+13
Hunter 2's Camp pre-1989	0	0	0
Hunter 2's Camp post-1989	0	0	0
Hunter 3's Camp 1990	15	15	0
Hunter 5's Camp 1990	22	33	-11

Sharing meat can be formal or informal. Both formal and informal sharing are vital to the social fabric of Basarwa life and occur even when economically unnecessary. Informal sharing occurs when people come from their own camps, usually located nearby, to the camp of the successful hunter to partake in the feast. Meat and bones are not usually removed from the camp of the successful hunter in informal sharing but are typically removed in formal sharing. Whereas formal sharing may be more visible, particularly to visiting anthropologists not living at the same hearth as their informants, informal sharing seems to be equally important. My observations suggest that a large amount of meat is informally shared; people who happen to be near the camp of a successful hunter will find an excuse to drop by and consume some of the meat. Unlike formal sharing, informal sharing includes anyone present at a hearth where meat is being consumed – relatives and friends from camps that do not participate in one's sharing network and even strangers who happen to drop by at an opportune time. On one occasion an entire steenbok was eaten at a single sitting by a number of people who happened to drop by a camp during a meal. I have often heard people say, 'let's go visit so and so's camp' because it is rumoured that there is meat there (this applies only to informal sharing among non-sharing partners; sharing partners are given meat whether or not they are present at the time of distribution and consumption).

Formal sharing occurs when meat and bones are taken to a different camp from that of the successful hunter. In most cases, the only people who participate in formal sharing are those in one's sharing network. Sometimes, however, formal sharing occurs when someone not from the sharing network visits a camp at a time when meat or other food is being distributed. Unlike informal sharing, which always involves cooked meat, formal sharing often involves raw meat. In terms of understanding sharing, both informal and formal sharing need to be considered.

Very small animals (hare-size or less) are often not shared, formally or informally, although there are notable exceptions; Hunter 3 once gave Hunter 5's family an entire squirrel (see Appendix).[12] Hunter 3, despite his high success rate indicated on table 1, usually catches jackal or smaller animals and only an occasional steenbok. Less successful hunters, such as Hunter 3, who do not have access to larger animals, may share smaller animals, such as squirrels, in order to maintain the sharing bond. Sharing a squirrel hardly represents an economic gain for Hunter 5, but it does represent a social gain for Hunter 3. Another example

of the social importance of sharing occurred when Hunter 3 and Hunter 5 both caught steenboks in their traps on the same day. They exchanged the shoulder area from the same side of each steenbok (see Appendix). When asked about this directly equivalent exchange, they laughed and said that they were just sharing meat (which does not necessarily imply economic gain or loss; nor were they cancelling 'old debts'). They did it because they were sharing partners (for similar observations among the equally highly egalitarian Batek, see Endicott 1988). Sharing partners are not necessarily biologically or otherwise related. For instance, although Hunters 3 and 5 are affines, Hunter 1, who also participates in their sharing network, is not related to either of them; they are friends (they speak different dialects of Sesarwa, the language of the Basarwa). At Kutse, sharing is a means of reaffirming and solidifying social relationships between relatives and friends.

Hunter 1's lack of hunting skill is a fact that everyone knows and occasionally discusses, although not necessarily judgementally (poor skill is defined here as an average success rate of less than 30 per cent., and an inability to obtain animals larger than a steenbok, Kent n.d.*a*). Residents at Hunter 5's camp say they share meat with Hunter 1's family, who are friends but not related, because Hunter 1 has small children who need the meat (the same reason was given for sharing meat with a sister's family in Hunter 5's sharing network). Hunter 1 blames his lack of hunting success on his eyesight. The chances of a major improvement in the future are slim. Hunter 1 is seldom successful enough to be a significant contributor to levelling out uncertainty in procurement (see table 1). Socially, however, Hunter 5 and his family have much to gain as the two families are friends and the sharing reinforces that friendship. There are, therefore, good economic reasons for Hunter 1 to participate in the sharing network, since it ensures that his family does not go hungry as a result of his lack of skill. However, there are no economic reasons for Hunter 5, who gives away more than he receives, to share with Hunter 1 (see table 2). The latter and his family do not perform other, non-hunting related tasks for Hunter 5, such as babysitting or fetching wood. Nor does Hunter 1 offer any other non-subsistence based skills of benefit to Hunter 5 and his family. Hunter 5, however, receives from Hunter 1 something not easily quantified – he reinforces a friendship while maintaining an egalitarian atmosphere which is considered essential in Kutse ethos (see also Draper 1975; Lee 1979; Silberbauer 1981).[13] As a consequence, everyone in the sharing network benefits socially, although not everyone benefits economically (e.g., Hunters 3 and 5; see table 2).

If sharing were primarily economic, sharing a squirrel or the same cut of meat would not make much sense. Nor would it be in his best interest for Hunter 5 to share with Hunter 1, who is rarely successful even though he hunts as often as the others (i.e., he hunts approximately the same number of hours per week; see table 1). It does make sense, however, as a means of binding individuals together and promoting egalitarianism.

Sharing also equalizes variation in hunting skill (as Bailey notes for the Efe Pygmies 1985: 201-2), especially the practice of distributing large packages of meat and bones to individuals for further distribution to others. This practice allows people who would otherwise have no meat to share to solidify important

social bonds. In one instance, a hunter gave all but the shoulders of a steenbok to his uncle who resided at the same windbreak. His uncle gave all but the chest to his son who lived at a different windbreak in the same camp. The son gave the lower back portion (sacrum area) of the steenbok to his sister who resided at a different but nearby camp which formed part of his sharing network. In addition, the son gave a thigh, including a femur, to a friend who lives at a different but nearby camp which also is part of the sharing network. The rest of the carcass he kept for himself and his family.

One means to quantify the results of sharing is to examine all the bones located on the surface of a camp (i.e., bones located within *and* between windbreaks, huts, ash areas and other loci; that is, all visible bones at the camp). The faunal remains provide a window on meat consumption when I am not physically present in the camp (e.g., between field seasons). To maintain comparability between camps, I examined camps with a similar population and similar number of dogs, and kept all other taphonomic processes and other factors equal.

If sharing were practised only for economic gain, one would expect those who participate in a sharing network to have a larger minimum number of individual animals present, as inferred from the bones; a generally increased absolute number of bones at camps; and/or a larger amount of meat by weight as calculated from the minimum number of individual animals. If we exclude the one camp occupied for six months and examine only those camps occupied for similar amounts of time (i.e., hold time constant), it is clear that the absolute number of bones does not increase at a camp because the residents participate within a sharing network (and, again, all taphonomic and other potentially complicating variables are held constant, Kent in press). The minimum number of individuals represented also does not differ between sharing and non-sharing camps. In fact, the only change is a higher taxa richness at camps whose members belong to a sharing network (t-test significant at the 0.05 level; Kent in press). In contrast, hunting skill is not significantly correlated with taxa richness; that is, better hunters do not necessarily exploit a wider range of species than poor hunters (Kent in press). The minimum number of individuals and taxa richness, as calculated from an inventory of all surface faunal remains, would have been very different at Hunter 1's camp if the occupants had not been involved in a sharing network (table 2).

It is interesting that sharing results in goat bone distributions at camps where inhabitants do not own, keep, or kill goats (a discussion of the impact of goats on hunting and other facets of Kutse life is detailed in Kent n.d.*a*), though goat bones are slightly more common at camps where occupants own goats (Kent in press). Each camp in the sharing network receives some goat meat and bones from friends who butcher a goat (see Appendix). Goat bones at a camp thus do not signify goat ownership. The task of herding goats is often shared, and some people keep their goats in the herds of others in their sharing network (however, a goat is often butchered and almost always eaten at its owner's camp and not necessarily at the camp where it was corralled). Goat milk and meat are included within sharing networks (although goat milk is not commonly consumed).

Sharing through butchering. Though the hunter who kills an animal usually butchers it, there is much flexibility and variability at Kutse. If the hunter is tired, not in

the mood, or wants to attend to another activity, he may ask someone else to butcher the animal. Typically, a relative or a close friend who forms part of his sharing network is asked. According to Hunter 5, he requested his father to butcher a duiker because 'he is my father; it's just the same if I were to do it. He gave birth to me. People here give to other people, so they can share with others, and so you don't always just share yourself'. Hunter 5 asks others to butcher his meat even when they have had nothing to do with its procurement (i.e., do not own the arrow, spear, dogs, or trap used to acquire it) more often than do less successful hunters. His father rarely hunts any more and can therefore share only when younger hunters give him large portions of meat that he can then distribute.

Among Central Kalahari Basarwa there are few formal arrangements governing the distribution of portions of a butchered carcass, as long as some meat is distributed to sharing partners (Silberbauer 1981: 233). The flexibility in meat distribution noted above allows men and women to make decisions concerning who should get which piece, and this process often involves rather lengthy discussions between husband and wife. The person who butchers the animal usually also distributes the meat on the advice of the hunter and often his wife. At Kutse, meat distribution is embedded in social obligations.

People do not live by meat alone

Residents who have cultivated melons, the primary crop at Kutse, often formally share them between households and between camps. Between 1987 and 1991, with the exception of 1988, few gardens were productive. The only exception, 1988, was the year after the drought ended. That year, 32 per cent. of the Basarwa (n=53) had crops mature to harvest. For the other years (1987, 1989-91), most residents had no melons that reached maturity and hence had no melons to share (for example, in 1989 no Basarwa gardens matured and only five, or 24 per cent., of all Bakgalagadi gardens matured). Although infrequent, cultivated melons are formally shared when available.

Inter-household and inter-camp sharing of wild plants occurs at Kutse. Tubers, fungi, wild melons and berries are commonly shared formally and informally, although not as regularly or in the same quantities as meat. Sometimes the plants shared are cooked, sometimes they are raw (the same is true for meat). This pattern of sharing both plant and animal foods, unless either is too small for distribution, has been noted among other strongly egalitarian societies, such as the Batek of Malaysia (Endicott 1979: 63). As Endicott also observes (1979: 64), 'The sharing ethic of the Batek is so strong that sharing occurs even when people have food, not just when they truly need it'. This pattern is not necessarily the same among less egalitarian foraging societies, although it is similar to that found at Kutse.

The !Kung also formally share wild plants, most notably mongongo nuts (Lee 1979: 200-1). The sharing of wild and, when available, domestic plants among foragers does not fit the economic explanations posited for sharing behaviour, particularly for risk minimization, since there is little risk to minimize with plant collecting. However, it does support the social relations model wherein sharing perpetuates and strengthens kin and friendship bonds.

Both cooked and uncooked maize meal (mealie meal), cooking oil and beans, distributed free by the government as part of drought relief, are shared among sharing partners, even immediately after its distribution when everyone has large quantities. Sharing partners often exchange identical bowls of cooked mealie meal porridge or beans just to be able to share something. The frequent formal and informal sharing of this resource cannot be ascribed to risk reduction of resources with low success returns, since the drought relief food, until the end of the dry season of 1990, was a predictable and free commodity that required no effort to procure. Whereas it may be argued that mealie meal cannot be used in studying sharing because it does not represent a traditional resource, I believe it highlights the lack of correspondence between the empirical data and the assumption that sharing has a direct economic basis. This lack of fit is less visible when examining only traditional foods, because the discrepancy between theory and data is not as dramatic. This is not to deny the economic impact of sharing, but it is to emphasize its social significance and impact.

As noted by Bird-David (1992), Lee (1979), Rosenberg (1990), Woodburn (1982), and others, no one is exempt from informal sharing in a society that depends on it to maintain its very foundation. At Kutse, visitors (including the anthropologist) and residents alike are expected to share at least informally, if not also formally. Even the sharing isolate, due to social obligations, must informally share food, though they do not often formally share.

Non-food sharing. It is necessary to study sharing in context of both food and non-food items in order to understand sharing behaviour. Food is important to share, but equally important, though less often discussed by anthropologists, is the sharing and borrowing of objects (recall that the Central Kalahari Basarwa have nothing equivalent to !Kung *hxaro*). Only a few personal items are not routinely shared. For example, a bone smoking pipe is formally shared only with one's spouse or lover, who may borrow it at any time; however, it is regularly shared informally with any visitors in camp, when it is passed around for others to smoke. The owner of the pipe or someone else provides the tobacco being smoked. Tobacco is routinely shared both informally outside and within sharing networks (the latter is most common) and formally within sharing networks.

As observed by Bird-David (1992: 31) for strongly egalitarian foragers, individuals persist in their demands (or nagging) irrespective of what they already possess (also see Lee 1988: 266-7; Rosenberg 1990). People are obliged to lend objects for as long as someone wants to borrow them. For instance, clothing I have given to a family to repay them for allowing me to live and eat with them tends to be shared along network lines, although not necessarily so. Such sharing is even more common with tools, except for one's hunting gear, though this can be shared by a spouse.

Sedentary Kutse residents are accumulating possessions in ways never possible while they were nomadic. As noted above, most of these objects are exotic trash retrieved from the game reserve refuse dump (Kent 1993*a*). At Kutse, an inventory of 2,279 items where ownership was established reveals that 26 per cent. of all objects were borrowed from someone outside the nuclear family. Of these, non-related friends account for 25 per cent. of all objects not owned by the immediate family associated with a particular windbreak or hut; general relatives

who are cousins or are more distant genealogically account for 25 per cent. of the objects; and 27 per cent. of all objects are owned by the informant's parents. Siblings, affines, aunts/uncles and other close relatives own the other material. It is clear that a large number of objects are shared ('borrowed' indefinitely) from parents, distant relatives and unrelated friends. Moreover, they are shared along the same lines as meat and vegetable foods.[14] Although I do not have data to evaluate this, it is possible that an even larger percentage of possessions would be shared between camps if trash were not so abundant and easily available to everyone to convert into useful possessions.

Inequality in the guise of equality? Speth (1990) has questioned the view that sharing mitigates differences in hunting skill, especially in terms of equalizing access to specific essential nutrients for non-hunters, such as women and children. Speth has correctly pointed out that Kalahari hunter-gatherers sometimes consume internal organs, the marrow of long bones (e.g., the metapodials), and occasionally the brain, all of which are high in fat content, at a hunting kill site. This occurs because of transport costs and other factors discussed by Lee (1979), Yellen (1991*a*; 1991*b*), Kent (in press, n.d.*a*,) and others. However, due to a lack of data in the literature, Speth has been unable to examine who eats what after distribution and cooking at the base camp.

A majority of the animals killed have all or most of their bones brought to camp (Kent in press). The only exceptions include some bones of very large animals, such as gemsbok. However, as pointed out by Bartram *et al.* (1991) for the Kūa, at least a few bones from these very large species invariably are transported to camp. Larger animals tend to have more fat in and around the muscle than smaller animals such as steenbok, which are very lean. According to Hitchcock & Osborn (1988: 11), 'carcass weight including fat and muscle is a linear function of live body weight for both wild and domesticated ungulates'. This fact may negate any discrepancies in the amount of fat consumed by hunters who eat marrow from very large species at a processing site and bring back only some bones for the others to extract marrow (Kent in press). The entire carcass of smaller animals, such as duiker and steenbok, are usually brought back to camp whole (but skinned and roasted to reduce carrying weight). Also, even less successful hunters have access to bone marrow because of the sharing network, as evident from the amount of bones and meat acquired by Hunter 1 through sharing (see Appendix). In addition, over the last five-year period, I have observed women and children consuming bone marrow in camp more often than the successful hunters (Kent in press).

The amount of fat males and females consume, therefore, more or less evens out, since females and children eat a large percentage of the marrow from bones that are returned to camp, and since animals smaller than gemsbok are more commonly killed than the larger species, only some of whose bones are cracked for marrow at the processing site (Bartram 1993). In other words, at Kutse, marrow does not appear to be differentially consumed by successful hunters, and patterns of sharing and food consumption are equitable due to intra- and inter-family sharing. My observations agree with those of other Kalahari researchers such as Howell (1986), who states that sharing equalizes differences in hunter skill. My work (n.d.*a*,*c*) and Howell's (1986) do not necessarily negate Speth's

theory, except for the Basarwa, who may be grouped with other strongly egalitarian societies on one end of a continuum.

Cross-cultural comparisons

This article began with the premiss that social relationships (i.e., kin and friendships) are a major organizing device that unites families in extremely egalitarian societies in the absence of clans, age grades, or similar associations that also can link people. Sharing is a mechanism that structures, maintains and perpetuates social relationships. Although highly egalitarian societies use sharing to create social solidarity, non-egalitarian societies use sharing to create social inequality, as with the case of so-called 'big men' in some societies who share more than others in order to elevate and/or maintain their status as leaders. Non-egalitarian societies organize behaviour and link people socially through socio-political stratification, economic differentiation and gender, social and/or political and other hierarchies. I suggest that sharing in strongly egalitarian societies is a fundamental principle that underlies, solidifies, and reinforces the all-important social relationships by equalizing otherwise unequal situations. Interviews show that sharing is deliberately manipulated in order to maintain social bonds (as evident in Hunter 5's explanation for giving his father large amounts of meat).[15] The potential economic factor of sharing is deliberately reduced in these societies by belittling one's success, insulting achievers, refraining from hunting for a period of days to weeks or even months, and de-emphasizing variation in skill (e.g., Lee 1979; Kent n.d.*a*). For instance, unlike foragers in other parts of the world, the more skilful Hunter 5 does not capitalize on his skill by increasing his hunting time – he hunts about the same number of hours per week as does less successful Hunter 1 (in contrast to skilled hunters among the Paraguay Aché hunter-gatherers described in Hawkes 1991). Moreover, informants rarely acknowledge that there is any economic gain from sharing. This has been observed in other highly egalitarian societies located outside the Kalahari. Endicott also notes that among strongly egalitarian tropical hunters and gatherers:

> The result is that all families end up with some food, though not necessarily the same amount, even on days when very little is brought into camp. Yet even when food is abundant, the sharing goes on according to the same principles, thus taking on a ritualized aspect as each family gives portions of its excess food to other families and receives portions – sometimes of the same kind of food – in turn.... This apparently unnecessary distribution confirms that sharing of food is a dominant value in Batek culture (1988: 116).

Many anthropologists who do not work in Botswana, and even some who do, are unaware of the diversity among Basarwa groups. This has been discussed in detail in Kent (1992; n.d.*b*); however, it is relevant to point out here that *hxaro*, a ritual exchange that aids in establishing and maintaining social and economic relationships, occurs among !Kung and Nharo but not among Central Kalahari Basarwa (Barnard 1992; Wiessner 1982*b*). In so far as *hxaro* is ritualized, involves the exchange of non-food objects, and links non-local groups between *n!ores*, it differs from anything practised at Kutse (Wiessner 1977). *Hxaro* has been described as providing a security network for groups inhabiting different areas and, in this respect, is more similar to economic reciprocity between groups than is sharing at Kutse, which is less concerned with establishing economic partnerships

than with maintaining social relationships. On an intra-band level, however, sharing among the !Kung appears to be very similar to that at Kutse.[16]

Although calculated differently, based on different kinds of data, and interpreted differently, research among the Aché yielded similar results: 'There are consistent differences between individuals in foraging skill which do not appear to be reflected in differential food consumption. Thus, all the data suggest that the Aché are pooling most of the food they acquire and are sharing food among families according to the number of dependents present' (Kaplan & Hill 1985: 233). According to Kaplan and Hill (1985: 234), skilled hunters share their meat with others for a number of reasons: in order to receive better treatment when they or their kin become ill (i.e., people are more likely to remain in one place so the skilful hunter can recuperate); because infanticide is less likely to occur to offspring of high producers than low producers (see also Hawkes 1991); and because skilful hunters who share also tend to have more than one wife (Hawkes 1991). None of these explanations of why successful hunters routinely share their meat is applicable to the Kutse data. More skilful hunters do not have more offspring nor more wives than less skilful hunters (the average number of children for the three good hunters in this study is 2.0 and the average number of children for the three poor hunters is 3.7; Kent n.d.*b* discusses this in detail). They do not practise infanticide and the six hunters on which the quantitative data are based are monogamous out of preference, as revealed through interviews. There is no apparent difference in the care given to the immediate relatives of high producers who share, however one measures it (e.g., providing bush medicine, not fighting, etc.). In other words, the observation that poor hunters and their kin eat as well as good hunters and their kin because of sharing is valid for Kutse, but for different reasons from those given for the Aché.

Perhaps most importantly, members of a Kutse sharing network are not always biologically related, which questions the validity of the proposition that sharing is a strategy to ensure maximum reproductive fitness (i.e., getting one's genes into the next generation's gene pool). In fact, Hunter 1 and Hunter 5 came from different regions and speak different dialects. If Kaplan and Hill's (1985) suggestions about fitness are correct for the Aché, they do not seem generalizable to other foraging groups. However, the interpretation that sharing maintains an egalitarian atmosphere under non-egalitarian conditions (different success rates), while reinforcing kin and friendship bonds that tie a group together by fostering group solidarity, might be cross-culturally valid for all extremely egalitarian foragers.

My interpretation of sharing in a forager society is also appropriate in very different environmental zones occupied by very different foraging peoples. For example, among the tropical forest Batek foragers, 'A very good hunter might not ever receive as much meat in return as he himself produces. Yet this imbalance does not seem to bother or even occur to the Batek. There is no evidence that they keep track of the amounts and kinds of foods given or received' (Endicott 1979: 64). Sharing food entitles one to continual participation in the sharing network. In addition, the sharing network is a social (i.e., friend/kin) network; those who share together also often forage together, dance together, entertain

together, and so on. The primacy of solidifying social relationships in sharing has been observed among different Basarwa groups, including the !Kung:

> What is critical to them [the Basarwa] is the precariousness of social relationships, involving a serious danger of being left more or less in a social vacuum: The San may just prefer not to relate to each other since 'nothing prevents them from splitting apart, except that an extremely small group is not viable. People may be based in the same territory but they do not have to live together' (Marshall 1976: 197-8). Basically, in a foraging band there are no other corporate interests keeping people together than precisely those involving the value of 'belonging' (Gulbrandsen 1991: 89-90).[17]

Sharing may have very different causes and ramifications in dissimilar societies or time periods. It might be inappropriate to lump together sharing in all societies or even sharing from all time periods (e.g., the changes at ≠Kade[18] during the 1980s and 1990s which have influenced sharing have not occurred at Kutse; see Osaki 1984; 1990; Tanaka 1987). Sharing may be linked to economic factors in non-egalitarian societies where differences in skill and material accumulation are not only permitted but encouraged; in more egalitarian societies sharing is linked to equalizing inequalities and solidifying social networks.

Other highly egalitarian African foragers are very similar in their demands for sharing, although these demands may be structured slightly differently between societies. A particularly good characterization of sharing among East African Hadza, which is equally apt for Basarwa, is the statement: 'As many anthropologists who have worked in societies with immediate-return systems will testify, people's demand for food and other goods from anthropologists, as well as *from members of their own society*, is very great, indeed at times almost insatiable' (Barnard & Woodburn 1988: 12, emphasis added). For example, sharing among the Hadza has been characterized as 'demand-sharing' (as sharing has been called among the Aka Pygmies, see Hewlett 1991: 28). This is 'strongly focused on the requirement that people who at some particular moment happen to have more of something than they immediately need should carry out their *moral obligation to share it out*' (Barnard & Woodburn 1988: 12, emphasis added). While Woodburn (1982) tends to view sharing and egalitarianism in economic terms (i.e., immediate-return) and I view them as more social, we agree on the necessity (real and/or perceived) of sharing in these societies.

An innovative interpretation of demand sharing suggested by Blurton Jones (1984; 1987) is that it should be considered as 'tolerated theft'. A difficulty with this view, however, is that the term 'theft' implies an illegal action. While demand sharing is forced, in that one person wants and takes something another does not want to share, it is not against the rules; it actually supports the informal laws of sharing in the society, as mentioned earlier. Demand or forced sharing occurs with the full knowledge of both the taker and the not-so-willing giver. For example, Hunter 5 asked his older sister for some wild tubers. She refused, even though she was part of his sharing network and therefore regularly received meat whenever Hunter 5 had some. Despite her protests, Hunter 5 took four wild tubers from her and ran to his hearth where he cleaned and roasted them. His sister could not complain, since she knew she should be sharing in the first place. Sharing in Hadza, Pygmy and other highly egalitarian societies also is not voluntary but is mandatory (Barnard & Woodburn 1988; Blurton Jones 1984; 1987; Hewlett 1991). Rather than tolerated theft, however, I think it is more

accurate to call this type of sharing 'demand sharing'. Hunter 5 did not technically steal the tubers; he merely took what was his from his unwilling sister – he was actually upholding the rules of society, not breaking them.

Although in general the Hadza may be classified as highly egalitarian, they are a little more stratified (but not hierarchically stratified) than are the Basarwa. This is most apparent in Hadza gender roles; Hadza men and women perform tasks that are segregated by gender, and sometimes have antagonistic attitudes towards each other (Blurton Jones *et al.* in prep.). As we have seen, this is not the case among the Basarwa, particularly those at Kutse. The difference between the two groups helps to elucidate the comparative nature of the term egalitarian: Hadza are more egalitarian than most societies but Central Kalahari Basarwa are more egalitarian than the Hadza. This indicates that there is a range of 'more' or 'less' equality even at the highly egalitarian end of the continuum, just as there is a range at the highly non-egalitarian end.

Modern Alaskan Nunamiut have a very different pattern of sharing from the one at Kutse and, as a result, my interpretations on sharing may not apply. The Nunamiut differentiate between stored meat which is not shared and meat that is not stored but is shared; therefore, individuals decide when, and most importantly, when not to share (Binford 1984). Stored meat is usually shared when a catastrophe occurs and a family's meat supply is destroyed (Binford in prep.). This type of sharing does not seem to be analogous to the sharing that regularly occurs in extremely egalitarian societies. In particular, the Nunamiut practice of sharing stored food only in emergencies is very different from the practice in Kutse where everyone immediately shares any animal, steenbok-size or larger, regardless of whether or not everyone already has meat.

Also in contrast to Kutse, successful Nunamiut hunters apparently do consume more meat and more high-quality organs and other animal parts (Binford 1984). This difference between Nunamiut and Kutse probably permeates the sharing of other types of food and non-food objects. Although we need to know more about Nunamiut sharing behaviour before explanations can be postulated, the differences between the groups might be associated with the Nunamiut practice of storing meat, something not practised at Kutse. Another reason for the differences may be that the Nunamiut are less egalitarian than the societies described here. One manifestation of this is that they have hunt leaders, a sociopolitical position that does not exist in most societies here classified as strongly egalitarian.[19]

Kenyan Okiek hunter-gatherers also practise different sharing patterns from Kutse residents. The Okiek do not regularly share all food or all possessions (F. Marshall 1993; Kent in press). Nor are they as strongly egalitarian as are Kutse residents (Fiona Marshall, personal communication), and in addition, they have both lineages and an age-set system (Blackburn 1982: 287-8). Although absent in most highly egalitarian societies, age-sets stratify and link people in the society, though not necessarily hierarchically. I suggest that the presence of lineages and age-sets and a less egalitarian ethos than that found among Basarwa, Hadza and similar groups, is reflected in Okiek sharing patterns wherein honey and other food resources are not routinely shared. Hopefully future field work will determine whether or not this is the case.

Discussion

> Non-class-based societies are usually not seen as qualitatively different from those that are class-organized when it comes to processes of leadership and decision making. Differences are seen as purely quantitative, and the possibility that altogether different sets of relationships from those involving economic power might be operating in non-class society is not followed through (Leacock 1978: 248).

It has been widely suggested that sharing mitigates variation in meat acquisition in many foraging groups (i.e., a basically economic explanation that is currently most popular for sharing – Binford in prep.; Bird-David 1992; Cashdan 1985; Kaplan *et al.* 1990; Smith 1988; Weissner 1982*b*; Winterhalder 1990; and others). The Kutse data are equivocal on this point. In general, there are no scheduled events at Kutse and no reason to go or not to go hunting on any particular day. Men go hunting when they feel like it, or when they are encouraged by their spouses to get meat, or when they think they will not miss anything interesting or exciting in camp or in the community (like free home-brewed beer, etc.). They may decide not to hunt because it is too cold, too hot, or too wet. In other words, there are few systematic reasons to go or not to go hunting on any particular day.

If the primary reason for sharing is to smooth daily fluctuations in meat acquisition, one might expect that sharing partners would stage their hunts more or less back-to-back so that at least one or more individuals hunt each day. This is not the case (see table 3). In fact, none of the hunters in the sharing network went foraging on 15 per cent. of all days observed. Further, the concept of reducing variability in hunting returns would lead to a prediction that someone would hunt if no meat were available in camp, particularly after a few days of little or no hunting success. Yet, in at least one instance, all members of Hunter 5's sharing network chose not to hunt on a day which followed several days of unsuccessful hunting and a lack of meat in camp.

In an analysis of sharing among the Nunamiut, Binford (in prep.) states that sharing is contingent on a people's assumption of environmental stability. Yet it might also be contingent on environmental instability. If events are so unpredictable that one has no way to anticipate hunting or collecting returns, then sharing can even out discrepancies. However, there are other more effective means to even out variability in hunting returns. For instance, the best hunter could simply assume an elevated sociopolitical position, using his skill and authority to even out the lack of success of less skilled hunters, rather than be insulted and modest as occurs in many strongly egalitarian societies. Conversely, someone could specialize as a full-time hunter. People could put up many more traps or hunt more, if social, political and economic prestige accrued to those who brought in the most meat, or if they wanted more individual assurance of success. In other words, there are a number of strategies other than sharing which could better average out hunting return variability, strategies that less strongly egalitarian societies employ.

Because sharing can even out hunting return variability does not mean that such a result is necessarily the best way to understand sharing. Correlation does not always equal causation. This is particularly the case in small-scale societies where all facets of culture are intertwined. In these societies, the type of sharing present results from their strong egalitarianism. Specifically, sharing integrates a

society and reinforces an egalitarian ethic. More complex societies have pan-tribal organizations, formal sociopolitical leaders and hierarchical stratification, as well as other means of achieving group cohesion which do not exist in extremely egalitarian societies. Therefore, sharing patterns are not necessarily the same, nor are they caused by the same factors, such as economics.

Bird-David (1992: 33) makes an intriguing suggestion that sharing may act as an insurance scheme which involves investment in a food banking system. She asks, 'does the general sharing of large game generate wealth because a large amount which would have been wasted on one's own friends and close relatives stretches farther when it is divided among all members of the group?' While this may be the case in some groups, it certainly is not the case at Kutse. Neither excess meat nor sharing is viewed in terms of wealth at Kutse. Using Bird-David's metaphors, sharing of large animals, at least at Kutse, does not generate wealth and there is 'little return' on the 'investment'. Furthermore, these terms do not account for the sharing of smaller animals such as steenbok and duiker that are regularly shared at Kutse but could easily be consumed by a family before the meat spoiled. Indeed, terms such as wealth, banking, and insurance are inappropriate metaphors for strongly egalitarian groups. These terms are based on a Western economic system that is generally not applicable to most forager societies (also see Endicott 1992: 38-9; Grinker 1992: 39).

Bird-David also proposes (1992: 34) that 'recipients of meat are likely to postpone hunting, since they have had a share and since they are confident that meat is secured in the bank of nature until they need it, meanwhile allowing more time for natural increase'. Once again, this does not occur at Kutse among sharing partners and it therefore is not a cross-culturally consistent generalization. In contrast to Bird-David's (1992) predictions, but consistent with the perspective of sharing described here, one example occurred when none of the sharing partners went hunting on a day which followed four consecutive unsuccessful hunting days and when the camp had no meat. Moreover, on numerous occasions hunters at Kutse foraged after already obtaining meat through sharing or hunting success or both (see table 3).

Conclusion

Sharing is an important institutionalized mechanism to maintain and enforce an egalitarian milieu, even in those situations that are inherently unequal, such as those related to success and skill in hunting. Sharing maintains and reinforces social relationships (though this view does not necessarily extend to non-egalitarian societies). As a consequence, sharing nullifies the social and economic significance of variations in hunting skill and success. Whereas in some societies kinship and friendship may divide people, in highly egalitarian societies they unite people. Egalitarianism is necessary for the cohesiveness of these societies and sharing is necessary for that egalitarianism.

It may be a mistake to divorce meat sharing from the sharing of wild plants and tools and other objects. These latter items also are frequently and regularly shared among families belonging to a sharing network, at least by the strongly egalitarian

TABLE 3. Hunting and returns for sharing partners for May-July 1990.

Date	*Hunter*	*Animal Procured*	*Shared*
May 24	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
May 25	NO HUNTING	-	-
May 26	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
May 27	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
May 28	Hunter 3	1 Squirrel	Yes
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
May 29	NO HUNTING	-	-
May 30	Hunter 5	1 Duiker & 1 Squirrel	Duiker, yes
	Hunter 3	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 7*	NOTHING	
May 31	Hunter 7	2 Steenboks	Yes
June 1	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
June 2	NO HUNTING	-	-
June 3	Hunter 5	2 Steenboks	Yes
	Hunter 8*	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
June 4	NO HUNTING	-	-
June 5	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
June 6	NO HUNTING	-	-
June 7	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 3	1 Scrub hare	No
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	
June 8	Hunter 8	1 Duiker	Yes
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
June 9	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 8	NOTHING	
June 10	Hunter 7*	1 Steenbok	N.A.**
	Hunter 8	1 Duiker	Yes
June 11	Hunter 1	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
June 12	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 7	2 Steenboks	Yes
June 13	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
June 14	Hunter 8	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 3	NOTHING	
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	
June 15	NO HUNTING	-	-
June 16	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	
	Hunter 8	NOTHING	
June 17	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
June 18	Hunter 5	1 Slender Mongoose & 1 Squirrel	No
	Hunter 1	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 3	1 Scrub hare	No
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	

Date	*Hunter*	*Animal Procured*	*Shared*
June 19	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 8	NOTHING,	
June 20	Hunter 5	1 Slender Mongoose	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 8	NOTHING, No	
June 21	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 3	NOTHING,	
June 22	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING,	
June 23	NO HUNTING	-	-
June 24	Hunter 5	1 Springbok	Yes
	Hunter 8	NOTHING	
June 25	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
June 26	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
June 27	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 8	NOTHING,	
June 28	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
June 29	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 3	NOTHING,	
June 30	Hunter 1	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
July 1	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
July 2	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING,	
July 3	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
July 4	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
July 5	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
July 6	Hunter 3	1 Steenbok & 1 Duiker	Yes both
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
July 7	Hunter 5	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 8	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	
July 8	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING,	
July 9	Hunter 3	1 Steenbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 7	NOTHING	
July 10	Hunter 5	NOTHING	
	Hunter 1	NOTHING	
	Hunter 3	NOTHING,	
July 11	Hunter 5	NOTHING,	
July 12	Hunter 5	1 Springbok	Yes
	Hunter 1	***	
NO HUNTING ON		May 25 & 29	
		June 2, 4, 6, 15 & 23,	

If a hunter is not listed for a day when other hunters are, it means he did not go hunting that day.
*Hunters 7 and 8 and Hunter 3 are not listed in Table 1 because I do not have time allocation data for their hunting and herding activities in 1990.
**The steenbok was sold to my field assistant, an unusual event that was a direct result of my influence of living in the camp.
***This hunting day is not included in Table 1 because Hunter 1 arrived back to camp very late, after I had moved to a new camp. I therefore did not observe whether or not he was successful.

foragers with whom I am familiar. Economic explanations, including risk minimization and other permutations of this perspective, have been given pre-eminence in societies where economics are not necessarily the most prominent factor in structuring society. Whereas it is true that humans must eat to survive and therefore are, at some level, driven by the economics of obtaining food, the same could be said about the need for some sort of social organization without which no society can exist. Thus, necessity does not by itself explain a fundamental behaviour such as sharing.

Over-emphasizing hunting (or in this case, the sharing of meat) in a forager society can result in potentially misleading views of these societies. There is no evidence that Kutse hunters attempt to mitigate hunting return variation or to maximize their reproductive fitness through sharing or through foraging time; nor is there any evidence that sharing is similar to deposits in a bank, or to an insurance policy. This is particularly the case when one views the entire system of sharing and does not exclude wild plants and non-edible objects.

In strongly egalitarian societies, sharing is motivated by the need to establish and perpetuate social bonds between camps. Sharing also acts as a levelling mechanism to equalize unequal situations, such as those resulting from hunting success rates which vary between individuals. When studying sharing it is crucial to study it within the context of the whole culture, including how it articulates with the social, political and economic organization of the society. It is important not to assume that sharing has the same effects in all societies. Among some Inuit groups, sharing leads to the opposite of levelling accumulations or status: 'Through a combination of competent production (both hunting and manufacture), clever trading and wise management of family affairs, it was possible for a north-west Alaskan Eskimo local family head to acquire considerable material wealth and, thereby, influence over his fellows' (Burch 1988: 107; see also Gould 1982). Thus, cross-cultural generalizations need to be applied to cross-culturally similar situations (i.e., strongly egalitarian societies with strongly egalitarian societies) or else we may make inappropriate comparisons leading to invalid conclusions.

Interviews, time allocation studies, possession and bone inventories, observations and other types of data all suggest that sharing is linked to the basic organization of egalitarian societies by creating and maintaining social bonds that unite people into a group. In this sense, sharing is the basic adhesive that holds the society together. Sometimes sharing will also have an economic component, but not always. Invariably, however, sharing will have a social component in that it promotes social bonding.

NOTES

I should like to thank the people of Kutse sincerely for allowing me to live among them and learn a little about their fascinating way of life. I thank Willy, my field assistant, for all his help and friendship over the past five years. I am most grateful to the Office of the President of

Botswana, and various Botswana government ministries, such as Local Government and Lands, National Museum and Art Gallery, and Remote Area Dwellers' Office, for permitting me to work at Kutse. I thank Hastings Donnan, Pat Draper, Barry Hewlett, Alan Barnard, Lewis Binford and two anonymous reviewers for valuable critical comments on a draft, although I take full responsibility for not following through on all their suggestions and for any inadequacies of the manuscript. Discussion on sharing with a number of other anthropologists also helped clarify my position. I appreciate funding from Wenner-Gren, the Fulbright Foundation and Old Dominion University College of Arts and Letters that allowed me to conduct the research. Pam Parsons input the quantifiable data, Marian Blue made editorial comments on a draft, Old Dominion Graphics drafted fig. 1, and Elaine Dawson typed the tables.

[1] Camps with one occupant are often inhabited by an adolescent, a woman whose husband is living with her co-wife, or an older widow; such a camp is invariably located near sharing partners.

[2] When people were no longer permitted to live on the newly established Khutse Game Reserve, they established the Kutse community to take advantage of the borehole that provided year-round water, to acquire the sporadic government supplied drought relief food, and/or to live with friends or relatives who lived at the community.

[3] 'Mo' means 'the person of' and is the singular of 'Ba' which means 'the people of'.

[4] Hunter 2 is my control for the amount of meat acquired per hunter and the number of hours spent hunting/trapping (but not for sharing, since his family is an anomaly when it comes to sharing). It is important to have a control for a diachronic study of a community, including variation in hunting time and yield, in order to determine if differences are the result of individual or environmental changes. I live with Hunter 2's family for at least a week or more during each field season (table 1).

[5] The total number interviewed is eighty, although not all were resident at Kutse during the same field season.

[6] This study included 4,787 objects from forty-six occupied and unoccupied camps (Kent 1993*a*).

[7] With only a few exceptions, all Kutse fights occur when one or more participants is drunk from home-brewed beer.

[8] According to Cronk (1991), Mukogodo pastoralists of Kenya profess to want sons and daughters equally, with a slight bias towards wanting more sons and towards cultural values that are male-oriented. However, parental investment, as measured by the number of visits to health clinics and informal observations, is higher for females. Cronk does not say if girls are ill more often or severely than boys, or if girls are more likely than boys to have illnesses considered treatable at a clinic; nor does he say if boys are frequently away from home to care for the herds and so less able than girls to attend the clinics; nor do we know if the behaviour observed and recorded as examples of preferential treatment of girls is based on Mukogodo or Western ideals of good treatment (e.g., perhaps it is not considered masculine to attend a clinic; we would need to know the percentage of adult males versus females who attend the clinics). Unfortunately, Cronk does not ask people why more girls are taken to the clinic than boys, making it difficult to assess his conclusion about the discrepancy between expressed attitudes and actual behaviour. Whatever the case, my behavioural observations at Kutse support the interview answers I received – boys and girls are not treated better than one another.

[9] The only woman to say she would rather be a male did so explicitly because of her desire to earn money by working in South African mines, where only men are usually hired.

[10] Although L. Marshall (1976) states that !Kung women do not touch men's hunting gear, at Kutse women can touch men's tools as long as they are not menstruating. It is not clear if Marshall meant that !Kung women never handle men's hunting gear or, as at Kutse, do not touch it only during menstruation.

[11] Traps are snares that are placed in the centre of a brush fence that funnels an animal to the snare (Kent n.d.*a*, fig. 2).

[12] The same applies to wild plants which are not always formally shared but can be, and sometimes are (particularly berries).

[13] Sharing also appears to influence spatial patterning and site structure in predictable ways (Gargett & Hayden 1991).

[14] Note that in areas of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve where profound change has occurred, a very different pattern of ownership and sharing seems to be emerging (Sugawara 1988).

[15] It is interesting to note that the maintenance of social relationships better accounts for the sharing observed among chimpanzees than did other hypotheses tested, such as sharing as a means to prevent costly fights through the appeasement of individuals (de Waal 1989: 454-6).

[16] A number of people have asked me why Central Kalahari Basarwa do not have *hxaro*. I would turn the question around and ask why do the !Kung have it. If you will allow me to speculate, I can posit several possibilities to account for the presence/absence of *hxaro*. Wiessner (1982*b*) explicitly states that *hxaro* involves social obligations that can be transformed into economic obligations when necessary. She states that the 'Kalahari environment [in Ngamiland] is highly amenable to pooling risk, because resources are localized and conditions vary from *n!ore* to *n!ore*' (1982*b*: 65). Is the Kalahari more uniform in the areas occupied by G/wi, G//ana and other central Basarwa groups? If so, variability between territories may be less, making trading partnerships between territories less critical. Or is it possible that !Kung dry season aggregations bring a larger number of people together from different *n!ores* (or territories) so that far-flung ties are more important for them than for Central Kalahari Basarwa who aggregate in the rainy season? In the latter case, I am assuming that if people who have nothing in common aggregate, they need something that links them together; perhaps for the !Kung it is *hxaro*, whereas Central Kalahari Basarwa might aggregate in smaller numbers and not need such links. Clearly more research and thinking is needed on this topic.

[17] Gulbrandsen (1991: 88-96) describes the breakdown of egalitarian principles and beliefs among groups that have been sedentary for decades, if not centuries, and pursue a subsistence strategy that differs from hunting and gathering. Sharing, he suggests, has changed in these communities (e.g., Ghanzi, Nata River, etc.) from establishing and perpetuating social relationships to tempering social discord due to the high aggregation and long-term settlement. As noted by Gulbrandsen (1991: 100-3), this is context-based and, as a consequence, does not pertain to all communities, including Kutse.

[18] Changes include hunting with guns on horseback, selling meat, etc. (see Osaki 1984; 1990).

[19] While the Pygmies also have hunt leaders, their sharing patterns are similar in many respects to those at Kutse (see Hudson 1990). A comparison of the hunt leader position in the two societies would be interesting. For example, it may be that Pygmy hunt leaders are more ephemeral and less socio-politically distinct than Nunamiut hunt leaders.

APPENDIX. Animals procured during 1990 observations (7 weeks for all camps except Hunter 2's camp which was observed for 2 weeks).

HUNTER 3'S CAMP

Animals brought in by hunting

Species	*Number of Individuals*	*Body Parts Given to other Camps*
Steenbok	2[a]	4 upper hindlimb (femur) 1 shoulder (scapula) 1 back (vertebral column, pelvis, sacrum)
Duiker	1	2 upper hindlimb 1 chest (sternum and ribs) 1 head (cranium and mandible) 1 neck (cervical vertebra) 1 shoulder (scapula)
Scrub hare	2	none shared with other camps
Squirrel	1	entire carcass given to Hunter 5's camp

Animals brought in from other camps through sharing

Species	*Camp that Shared Meat*	*Body Parts Received from other Camps*
Steenbok	Hunter 5's camp	6[a] upper hindlimb 1 upper forelimb (humerus) 1 shoulder 1 chest 1 lower back (sacrum, pelvis and vertebra)
	Hunter 1's camp	1 upper hindlimb
	Hunter 1's camp	meat without bones
Duiker	Hunter 5's camp	1 upper hindlimb 1 upper forelimb
Springbok	Hunter 5's camp	meat without bones
Gemsbok	friend[b]	meat without bones (shared with Hunter 1 and 5's camps)
Goat	friend[b]	unidentified portions with bones

HUNTER 2'S CAMP

Animals brought in by hunting:

Species	*Number of Individuals*	*Body Parts Given to other Camps*
Steenbok	1	none shared
Duiker	1	none shared
Genet	1	none shared
Slender mongoose	2	none shared
Springbok	2	1[c] chest (part of the ribs), 2 humeri, 2 scapula, and thigh meat without bone

No meat was brought in to this camp from other camps.

HUNTER 5'S CAMP

Animals brought in by hunting

Species	*Number of Individuals*	*Body Parts Given to other Camps*
Steenbok	19[a]	12 upper hindlimb (not including carcass listed below) 1 upper forelimb 1 head 1 lower back (sacrum area) 1 chest 1 shoulder 2 unidentified portions 3 carcasses, except cranium and lower limbs (tibia on down)
Springbok	2	only meat without bones shared

Bird (Black Korhann)	1	none shared to other camps
Duiker	3	4 upper hindlimb 1 lower hindlimb (tibia) 2 upper forelimb 2 shoulder
Squirrel	2	none shared
Slender Mongoose	2	none shared

Animals brought in from other camps through sharing

Species	*Camp that Shared Meat*	*Body Parts Received from other Camps*
Steenbok	Hunter 3's camp	3 upper hindlimb 1 chest 1 back 1 shoulder 1 unidentified portion
	Hunter 1's camp	2 back 3 upper hindlimb 2 cranium 1 neck 1 unidentified portion
Duiker	Hunter 3's camp	1 femur 1 shoulder
Squirrel	Hunter 3's camp	entire carcass
Goat[b]	Hunter 3's camp	2 upper hindlimb 1 upper forelimb
	friend[b]	meat without bones
	friend[b]	1 head 1neck
Gemsbok	Hunter 3's camp	meat without bones

HUNTER 1'S CAMP

Animals brought in by hunting

Species	*Number of Individuals*	*Body Parts Given to other Camps*
Steenbok	3	2 upper hindlimb 2 back 2 head 1 neck

Animals brought in from other camps through sharing

Species	*Camp that Shared Meat*	*Body Parts Received from other Camps*
Steenbok	Hunter 5's camp	6[a] upper hindlimb 1 head 2 unidentified portion meat without bones
	Hunter 3's camp	1 upper hindlimb 1 unidentified portion

Duiker	Hunter 3's camp	2 upper hindlimb 1 lower hindlimb 1 upper forelimb 2 shoulder
	Hunter 3's camp	1 upper hindlimb
Springbok	Hunter 5's camp	meat without bones
Goat	friend[b]	unidentified portion

a. One from Hunter 1's camp and one from Hunter 3's camp and two individuals from Hunter 5's camp are immature.

b. Meat was obtained from a friend who does not belong to the sharing network living at another camp at Kutse.

c. The meat that went out of this camp was the result of selling rather than sharing. However, that any meat at Hunter 2's camp was sold was the direct result of my presence (when several non-local Batswana came by to see me, they saw the animal being butchered and insisted on buying some. Hunter 2 refused to sell at first and then did so only very reluctantly and only after much nagging on the part of the Batswana).

REFERENCES

Bailey, R. 1985. The socioecology of Efe Pygmy men in the Ituri Forest, Zaire. Thesis, Harvard University.

Barnard, A. 1978. Universal kin categorization in four Bushman societies. *Afr. Stud.* **87**, 69-81.

——— 1992. *Hunters and herders of southern Africa: a comparative ethnography of the Khoisan people.* Cambridge: Univ. Press.

——— & J. Woodburn 1988. Property, power and ideology in hunter-gathering societies: an introduction. In *Hunters and gatherers 2: Property, power and ideology.* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Bartram, L. Jr 1993. Perspectives on skeletal parts profiles and utility curves from eastern Kalahari ethnoarchaeology. In *From bones to behavior.*(ed.) J. Hudson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press.

——— , E. Kroll & H. Bunn 1991. Variability in camp structure and bone food refuse patterning at Kua San hunter-gatherer camps. In *The interpretation of archaeological spatial patterning* (eds) E. Kroll & T.D. Price. New York: Plenum Press.

Begler, E. 1978. Sex, status and authority in egalitarian society. *Am. Anthrop.* **80**, 371-87.

Binford, L. 1978. *Nunamiut ethnoarchaeology.* New York: Academic Press.

——— 1984. Butchering, sharing, and the archaeological record. *J. anthrop. Archaeol.* **3**, 235-57.

——— in preparation. Site structure (tentative title). Princeton: Univ. Press. Manuscript in preparation.

Bird-David, N. 1992. Beyond 'The original affluent society'. *Curr. Anthrop.* **33**, 25-47.

Blackburn, R. 1982. In the land of milk and honey: Okiek adaptations to their forests and neighbours. In *Politics and history in band societies* (eds) E. Leacock & R. Lee. Cambridge: Univ. Press.

Blurton Jones, N. 1984. A selfish origin for human food sharing: tolerated theft. *Ethol. Sociobiol.* **5** 1-3.

——— 1987. Tolerated theft: suggestions about the ecology and evolution of sharing, hoarding and scrounging. *Social Sci. Info.* **26**, 31-54.

——— , K. Hawkes & J. O'Connell in preparation. How should we explain differences between the Hadza and the !Kung? In *Cultural diversity among twentieth century foragers: an African perspective* (ed.) S. Kent. Book submitted for publication.

Burch, E. 1988. Modes of exchange in north-west Alaska. In *Hunters and gatherers 2: Property, power and ideology* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Cashdan, Elizabeth 1980. Egalitarianism among hunters and gatherers. *Am. Anthrop.* **82**, 116-20.

——— 1985. Coping with risk: reciprocity among the Basarwa of Northern Botswana. *Man* (N.S.) **20**, 454-74.

Cronk, L. 1991. Intention versus behaviour in parental sex preferences among the Mukogodo of Kenya. *J. biosocial Sci.* **23**, 229-40.

de Waal, Frans 1989. Food sharing and reciprocal obligations among chimpanzees. *J. hum. Evol.* **18**, 433-59.

Draper, P. 1975. !Kung women: contrasts in sexual egalitarianism in foraging and sedentary contexts. In *Toward an anthropology of women* (ed.) R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press.

——— 1992. Room to maneuver. !Kung women cope with men. In *Sanctions and sanctuary: cultural perspectives on the beating of wives.* (eds) D. Counts, J. Brown & J. Campbell. Boulder: Westview Press.

——— & M. Kranichfeld 1990. Coming in from the bush: settled life by the !Kung and their accommodation to Bantu neighbors. *Hum. Ecol.* **18**, 363-84.

Endicott, Karen. 1979. Batek Negrito sex roles. Thesis, Australian National University.

Endicott, Kirk 1988. Property, power and conflict among the Batek of Malaysia. In *Hunters and gatherers 2: property, power and ideology* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

——— 1992. Comment on 'Beyond the original affluent society' by N. Bird-David. *Curr. Anthrop.* **33**, 38-9.

Fiddes, N. 1991. *Meat: a natural symbol.* London: Routledge.

Frieze, I. & A. Browne 1989. Violence in marriage. In *Family violence* (eds) L. Ohlin & M. Tonry. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Gargett, R. & B. Hayden 1991. Site structure, kinship, and sharing in Aboriginal Australia: implications for archaeology. In *The interpretation of archaeological spatial patterning* (eds) T. D. Price & E. Kroll. New York: Plenum.

Gibson, T. 1988. Meat sharing as a political ritual: forms of transaction versus modes of subsistence. In *Hunters and gatherers 2,: property, power and ideology* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Gould, R. 1982. To have and have not: the ecology of sharing among hunter-gathers. In *Resource managers: North American and Australian hunter-gatherers* (eds) N. Williams & E. Hunn. American Association for the Advancement of Science, Selected Symposium **67**, 69-91.

Grinker, R.R. 1992. Comment on 'Beyond the original affluent society' by N. Bird-David. *Curr. Anthrop.* **33**, 39.

Guenther, M. 1983-1984. Bushwoman: The position of women in San society and ideology. *J. comp. Soc. Relig.* **10-11**, 12-31.

Gulbrandsen, Ø. 1991. On the problem of egalitarianism: the Kalahari San in transition. In *The ecology of choice and symbol: essays in honour of Fredrik Barth* (eds) R. Grønhaug, G. Haaland & G. Henriksen. Bergen: Altna Mater Forag.

Hames, R. 1990. Sharing among the Yanomamo: Part 1, the effects of risk. In *Risk and uncertainty in tribal and peasant economies* (ed.) E. Cashdan. Boulder: Westview Press.

Hawkes, K. 1991. Showing off: tests of an hypothesis about men's foraging goals. *Ethol. Sociobiol.* **12**, 29-54.

——— & J. O'Connell 1992. On optimal foraging models and subsistence transitions. *Curr. Anthrop.* **33**, 63-6.

Hewlett, Barry 1991. *Intimate fathers: the nature and context of Aka Pygmy infant care.* Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.

Hill, K. 1983. Adult male subsistence strategies among Ache hunter-gatherers of Eastern Paraguay. Thesis, University of Utah. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.

Hitchcock, R. & A. Osborn 1988. San hunting strategies and physiological ecology: preliminary considerations. Paper presented at the XII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

Howell, N. 1986. *Demography of the Dobe !Kung.* New York: Academic Press.

Hudson, J. 1990. Identifying food-sharing archaeologically: an ethno-archaeological study among the Aka. Paper presented at the Sixth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Ingold, T. 1987. *The appropriation of nature.* Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press.

——— 1988. Notes on the foraging mode of production. In *Hunters and gatherers: history, evolution and social change* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Kaplan, H. & K. Hill 1985. Food sharing among Ache foragers: tests of explanatory hypotheses. *Curr. Anthrop.* **26**, 223-46.

——— , ——— & A.M. Hurtado 1990. Risk, foraging and food sharing among the Ache. In *Risk and uncertainty in tribal and peasant economies* (ed.) E. Cashdan. Boulder: Westview Press.

Kent, S. 1984. *Analyzing activity areas: an ethnoarchaeological study of the use of space.* Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press.

——— 1985. The effects of television viewing: a cross-cultural study. *Curr. Anthrop.* **26**, 121-6.

——— 1989*a*. And justice for all: the development of political centralization among newly sedentary foragers. *Am. Anthrop.* **91**, 703-11.

——— 1989*b*. Cross-cultural perceptions of farmers as hunters and the value of meat. In *Farmers as hunters: the implications of sedentism* (ed.) S. Kent. Cambridge: Univ. Press.

——— 1991. Partitioning space: cross-cultural factors influencing domestic spatial configuration. *Env. Behav.* **23**, 438-73.

——— 1992. The current forager controversy: real versus ideal views of hunter-gatherers. *Man* (N.S.) **27**, 40-65.

——— 1993*a*. Models of abandonment and material culture frequencies. In *Abandonment processes: seasonal variation and regional mobility* (eds) C. Cameron & S. Tomka. Cambridge: Univ. Press.

——— *1993b*. Does sedentism impact traditional gender roles? A case study from the Kalahari. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference on Hunters and Gatherers, Moscow, Russia. August 1993.

——— in press. The influence of hunting skill, sharing, mode of cooking, and dogs on faunal remains at a sedentary Kalahari community. *J.anthrop.Archaeol.*

——— n.d.*a*. Hunting variation in a recently sedentary Kalahari village. In *Cultural diversity among twentieth century foragers: an African perspective* (ed.) S. Kent. Manuscript submitted for publication.

——— n.d.*b*. Cultural diversity in African foragers. In *Cultural diversity among twentieth century foragers: an African perspective* (ed.) S. Kent. Manuscript submitted for publication.

——— n.d.*c*. Bakgalagadi: The other inhabitants of the Kalahari. Manuscript submitted for publication.

——— & D. Dunn 1993. The etiology of hypoferremia in a recently sedentary Kalahari village. *Am. J. trop. Med. Hyg.* (May).

Leacock, E. 1978. Women's status in egalitarian society: implications for social evolution. *Curr. Anthrop.* **19**, 247-75.

Lee, R. 1979. *The !Kung San: men, women, and work in a foraging society.* Cambridge: Univ. Press.

——— 1988. Reflections on primitive communism. In *Hunters and gatherers 1: history, evolution and social change* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Marshall, F. 1993. Food sharing and the faunal record. In *From bones to behavior* (ed.) J. Hudson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press.

Marshall, L. 1976. *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Osaki, M. 1984. The social influence of change in hunting technique among the Central Kalahari San. *Afr. Stud. Monogr.* **5**, 49-62.

——— 1990. The influence of sedentism on sharing among the Central Kalahari hunter-gatherers. *Afr. Stud. Monogr.* Supplemental **12**, 59-87.

Rosenberg, H. 1990. Complaint discourse, aging, and caregiving among the !Kung San of Botswana. In *The cultural context of aging: worldwide perspectives* (ed.) J. Sokolvsky. New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Silberbauer, G. 1981. *Hunter and habitat in the Central Kalahari Desert.* Cambridge: Univ. Press.

Smith, E. 1988. Risk and uncertainty in the 'original affluent society': evolutionary ecology of resource-sharing and land tenure. In *Hunters and gatherers: history, evolution, and social change* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

——— 1991. *Inujjuamiut foraging strategies.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

——— & R. Boyd 1990. Risk and reciprocity: hunter-gatherer socioecology and the problem of collective action. In *Risk and uncertainty in tribal and peasant economies* (ed.) E. Cashdan. Boulder: Westview Press.

Speth, J. 1990. Seasonality, resource stress, and food sharing in so-called 'egalitarian' foraging societies. *J. anthrop. Archaeol.* **9**, 148-88.

Sugawara, K. 1988. The economics of social life among the Central Kalahari San (G//anakhwe and G/wikhwe) in the sedentary community at !Koi!kom. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, Darwin, Australia.

Tanaka, J. 1987. The recent changes in the life and society of the Central Kalahari San. *Afr. Stud. Monogr.* **7**, 37-51.

Wiessner, P. 1977. Hxaro: a regional system of reciprocity for reducing risk among the !Kung San. Thesis, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.

——— 1982*a*. Beyond willow smoke and dogs' tails: a comment on Binford's analysis of hunter-gatherer settlement systems. *Am. Antiq.* **47**, 171-8.

——— 1982*b*. Risk, reciprocity and social influences on !Kung San economics. In *Politics and history in band societies* (eds) E. Leacock & R. Lee. Cambridge: Univ. Press.

Winterhalder, Bruce 1986. Diet choice, risk and food sharing in a stochastic environment. *J. anthrop. Archaeol.* **5**, 369-92.

——— 1990. Open field, common pot: harvest variability and risk avoidance in agricultural and foraging societies. In *Risk and uncertainty in tribal and peasant economies* (ed.) E. Cashdan. Boulder: Westview Press.

Woodburn, James 1982. Egalitarian societies. *Man* (N.S.) **17**, 431-51.

——— 1988. African hunter-gatherer social organization: is it best understood as a product of encapsulation? In *Hunters and gatherers 1: history, evolution and social change* (eds) T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg.

Yellen, John 1991*a*. Small mammals: post-discard patterning of !Kung San faunal remains. *J. anthrop. Archaeol.* **10**, 152-92.

——— 1991*b*. Small mammals: !Kung San utilization and the production of faunal assemblages. *J. anthrop. Archaeol.* **10**, 1-26.

Le partage dans une communauté égalitaire du Kalahari

Résumé

On a souvent vu dans le partage, phénomène caractéristique des sociétés de chasseurs-collecteurs, un mécanisme permettant d'atténuer les aléas de la chasse et d'assurer une répartition plus équitable du gibier. Vu sous cet angle, le partage est avant tout de nature économique. Mais même si des raisons économiques se cachent derrière lui, c'est le fait qu'il favorise le maintien de réseaux sociaux qui doit être retenu comme l'élément véritablement significatif. On met cette hypothèse à l'épreuve de l'examen détaillé de la façon dont le partage est pratiqué par cinq familles du Kutse, une communauté récemment sédentarisée dans le désert du Kalahari au Botswana. Ces observations, datant de 1990, sont comparées à des données collectées au cours d'autres périodes de recherche sur le terrain entre 1987 et 1991. On montre que sans les réseaux de partage, dont l'importance dépasse largement le cadre alimentaire, la société ne pourrait pas maintenir le même climat d'égalitarisme, surtout en ce qui concerne certaines activités, comme par exemple la chasse, dont le rendement est basé sur des aptitudes inégales. A partir d'études portant sur les relations hommes-femmes et sur le partage du gibier, l'auteur démontre que le partage au sein d'une société égalitaire renforce les liens entre acteurs sociaux, et assure le maintien d'une vision égalitaire.

Anthropology Program, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia 23529, U.S.A.