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Learning to Be Smart: An Exploration of the Culture of Intelligence in a Canadian Inuit Community

The understanding of intelligence and cognitive functioning of culturally diverse peoples has long been an interest of social scientists. It has also long been recognized that environmental factors and cultural values affect both perceptual abilities and the display of cognitive functioning. While some scholars have proposed the existence of multiple forms of intelligence, others have argued that the assessment of intelligence requires the application of local definitions of intelligence and intelligent behavior. In the present paper I explore the concept of intelligence in the small Copper Inuit community of Holman. Data collected between 1978 and 1995 are used to examine the manner in which community members define, assess, and develop intelligence. Modernity has created new conditions in which intelligence is nurtured and assessed. Particular attention is paid to informant efforts to encourage the author to behave intelligently. *[Inuit, theories of intelligence, participant-observation]*

Current popular conceptions of intelligence in North America generally embrace the notion that intelligence is a measurable level of cognitive functioning or IQ (sometimes referred to as *g* or general intelligence). With some notable exceptions, so the popular theory goes, those individuals who possess high IQs are readily identifiable by testing and by their success in school. Despite the widely held belief in the universality of cognitive functioning, social scientists have long recognized that environmental, social, and cultural factors make it difficult to measure cognitive functioning across cultures or even across subpopulations of the same culture. This widespread acceptance of a universal form of intelligence is, however, relatively recent. Previous social theory held that social environment determined mental functioning. The leading proponent of this older, relativist view of intelligence was Lucien Lévy-Bruhl who, beginning with *How Natives Think* ([1910]1926), published six books devoted to understanding and explaining human thought processes. Drawing on the Durkheimian notion of collective representations, Lévy-Bruhl compared the mental functioning of Europeans and non-Western peoples. Accordingly, non-Western people were said to

> perceive nothing in the same way as we [Europeans] do. The social milieu which surrounds them differs from ours, and precisely because it is different, the external world they perceive differs from that which we apprehend. Undoubtedly they have the same senses as ours—rather more acute than ours in a general way, in spite of our persuasion to the contrary—and their cerebral structure is like our own. But we have to bear in mind that which their collective representations instil into all their perceptions. [Lévy-Bruhl (1910) 1926:43]

Non-Western people did not lack intelligence, according to Lévy-Bruhl. He asserted instead that differences in social environment rather than any racial or genetic characteristics were the sources of variation between "primitive mentality" and the thought processes of modern Europeans. Nonetheless, European thought was described as logical, rational, and scientific while non-Westerners' restrictive social environment limited their ability to engage in logical, scientific reasoning.

Opposition to the notion that primitive peoples lacked rational thought came from several scholars. Among them, Malinowski was perhaps the most direct. Drawing examples from his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski argued that Trobrianders employed "genuine" science, developed from empirical observations and experience.

> Can we regard primitive knowledge, which, as we found, is both empirical and rational, as a rudimentary stage of science, or is it not at all related to it? If by science be understood a body of rules and conceptions, based on experience and derived from it by logical inference, embodied in material achievements and in a fixed form of tradition and carried on by some sort of social organization—then there is no doubt that even the lowest savage communities have the beginnings of science, however rudimentary.
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> Most epistemologists would not, however, be satisfied with such a "minimum definition" of science, for it might apply to

American Anthropologist 101(3):502–514.

> the rules of an art or craft as well. They would maintain that the rules of science must be laid down explicitly, open to control by experiment and critique by reason. They must not only be rules of practical behavior, but theoretical laws of knowledge. Even accepting this stricture, however, there is hardly any doubt that many of the principles of savage knowledge are scientific in this sense. [Malinowski 1948:17]

Perhaps following Malinowski's lead, anthropology and cross-cultural psychology went through a period beginning in the 1950s in which enormous efforts were made to compare the perceptual and cognitive abilities of diverse populations. Much of the work of the period focused on attempts to develop "culture-free" instruments to measure intelligence. Cross-cultural comparisons were made in order to discover biological and cultural universals of intelligence and in order to understand how ecological variables affect cognitive functioning. This focus on human universals underlay a good deal of mid-twentieth-century anthropological inquiry (Collier et al. 1982). One consequence of the shift from the certainty that people in different circumstances think differently to a belief that all peoples everywhere think in the same ways is the acceptance of claims that intelligence can be measured cross-culturally. However noble the purpose of attempts to prove a universal form of intelligence, the results have been somewhat less lofty. Even with so-called "culture free" tests of cognitive abilities, the faculties measured by these instruments often differ from those valued in non-Western societies. One result is the unfortunate and scientifically dubious comparison of group intelligence in which, almost invariably, minorities and non-Western peoples are found to have intellectual abilities inferior to those of whites. *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1994) provides a recent example of this. Having crossed the ambiguous border from academic to popular science, the book generated an outcry in some academic and political circles, but its resonance with the public demonstrates the widespread acceptance of both the universality and measurability of human intelligence.

The purpose of this paper, however, is not a critique of popular views of intelligence or of cross-cultural research. Rather, it is an examination of the ways that intelligence is understood, discussed, and encouraged by contemporary Inuit. The data come from the community of Holman, in the Central Canadian Arctic. They were collected by Richard G. Condon and by me during several fieldwork episodes between 1978 and 1995. The subject of "intelligence" was never specifically investigated by either of us but is integral to the topics we did set out to study: seasonal differences in behavior and health, child rearing and adolescent development, acculturation and ethnic identity, and historical changes in family and household form. Thus, our field notes are peppered with references to skills and behaviors that Holman residents described as "smart."

Holman, located more than three hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, is remote, but it is no longer isolated from the larger Canadian and global society. The first sustained contact with non-Inuit occurred in the 1920s and was with traders, missionaries, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. A few children attended Catholic boarding schools in the 1940s and numerous children and adults were patients at TB sanatoria in the 1940s and '50s. Larger numbers of children were sent out to boarding schools in the 1950s and early '60s. A federal day school (grades K through 8) was built in Holman in 1966, but attendance remained irregular until a new school with a gymnasium were constructed in 1985. Satellite television arrived in 1980. Sometime during the 1960s and '70s, English became the dominant language in the community and children ceased to learn Inuinnaqtun.[1]

Enormous changes in the local economy occurred in the mid-1980s. Up until that time it was largely sustained by hunting, fur sales, and arts and crafts production. In recent years, however, both wage labor and social assistance have come to dominate arctic village economies. This change in Holman and throughout the North is the result of a complex combination of factors largely beyond the control of arctic residents. Holman achieved hamlet (or municipal) status in 1984. This permitted local control over existing and greatly expanded municipal services. That same year Holman residents and those of the five Western Arctic communities signed a land claims agreement with the government of Canada. Through the provisions of the land claims agreement, as well as a general devolution of control from Ottawa and Yellowknife to communities, still more services (and, thus, employment opportunities) were transferred to Holman. Hunting, and especially fur trading, were dealt a blow by a vocal and powerful animal rights movement (see Wenzel 1991). The combination of low fur prices and high equipment costs made hunting and trapping uneconomical for all but the most committed. Thus, few young Holman Inuit developed the knowledge necessary for sustained dependence on the traditional economy. Nonetheless, Holman Inuit continue to value traditional activities such as hunting (Condon et al. 1995), and wage labor opportunities are insufficient to meet the demand of a rapidly growing population.

The foregoing description has been necessarily brief but was offered primarily to present the economic and social factors that may be related to changing Inuit conceptions of intelligence. A fuller ethnographic description of Holman may be found in Condon (1983, 1987, 1996).

In the 1990s, Holman residents serve on community and regional boards and travel frequently for meetings, workshops, and training sessions. Occasions to meet and interact with Inuit from other communities are greater than at any time in the past. There is also much more opportunity for exposure to the values of the nation at large. Most

adolescents have the opportunity to attend a regional high school, and a few have gone on to university. In the past, the skills or competences that were necessary for survival were the same for all. This is no longer the case. Holman adults have modified their own behavior and their child-rearing practices to meet the changing demands of Inuit and Canadian society. What constitutes intelligent behavior in Holman is different today than it was in the past. At the same time, although while ideas about intelligence are informed by the popular views of the dominant Canadian society, they are not identical to those of the larger society.

What Is Intelligence?

A brief review of the psychological literature reveals a great diversity of theories on the nature of intelligence and suggests that it "is among the most elusive of concepts" (Sternberg 1985:3). Scientific theories of the nature of intelligence fall into two broad types: explicit and implicit.

Explicit theories equate intelligence with cognitive functioning. These theories propose that intelligence is a universal and quantifiable entity that regulates performance on intellectual tasks. This general capacity is thought to be comprised of differing components, which vary in number depending upon who is doing the counting (see, for example, Guilford and Hoepfner 1971; Thurstone 1938). These include, but are not limited to, verbal comprehension and fluency, mathematical ability, spatial visualization, and processing speed. Because it is possible to measure some aspects of cognitive activity with IQ or aptitude tests, hierarchical rankings of individuals' performances are also possible. A major criticism of the explicit approach to the definition of intelligence lies with the measurement process itself. As Wagner and Sternberg (1986) and many others have pointed out, both the tests and the testing situation vary considerably from the sorts of abilities that demonstrate competence in real-world, everyday functioning.

Implicit theories of intelligence are more fuzzy. They are developed by asking what constitutes intelligent behavior in real-world situations and "consist of people's stated or implemented beliefs regarding intelligent functioning" (Sternberg 1985:31). Because different groups of people inhabit different ecological niches and possess differing cultural values, it is reasonable to assume that intelligent behavior also differs from culture to culture and, perhaps, from setting to setting within particular cultures. Rather than seeing intelligence as a measurable cognitive capacity, proponents of implicit theories view intelligence as configurations of competences. Different cultures and subcultures vary in the emphasis placed upon various expressions of intelligence. The skills and behaviors that are valued and encouraged in one society may be quite different from those valued and encouraged in another.

The universality of intelligence is not automatically ruled out by adherence to an implicit theory. Nor is it specifically ruled in. Berry (1974:225) argues for a position of "radical cultural relativism" but nevertheless asserts "that indigenous notions of cognitive competence [must] be the sole basis for the generation of cross-culturally valid descriptions and assessments of cognitive capacity."

> [W]e are all members of the same species, we all use language, we all form social relationships and institutions, we all process information, use it, store it and work it over; in other words, the very existence of human beings as a successful, social and adaptive species implies the existence of some cognitive universals. [Berry 1984:334]

Proponents of implicit theories of intelligence (including Berry 1974; Ceci 1996; Gardner [1983]1993; Ogbu 1981; Sternberg 1985; Vernon 1969) argue that intelligence is far more than cognitive ability. Rather, intelligence is all those information-processing faculties and behaviors that enable an individual to function successfully in the real world. It may be irrelevant to have superior cognitive skills if an individual is unable to bring them to bear in a real-world context (Sternberg 1996).

There is considerable variation even within the broad category of implicit theories of intelligence (see Ceci 1996:194) with little success at bridging what Sternberg (1994), only somewhat tongue-in cheek, terms "the theoretical islands." An important difference among implicit theories lies in whether intelligence is assumed to be an integrated complex of abilities or a series of distinct, unrelated abilities. It is not clear to me that this is an either/or proposition. Recent work by anthropologists and psychologists (Berry and Bennett 1992; Bloch 1998; Worsley 1997) suggests that intelligence may be both integrated and compartmentalized and that cognition operates differently in different contexts. None of the current paradigms for understanding intelligence take such an approach. Thus, in considering Western psychology's theories of intelligence, I have limited the detailed description to the two that seem to be the most useful in understanding the ways Inuit view intelligence: Sternberg's triarchic model of intelligence (1985) and Gardner's multiple intelligences ([1983]1993).

In the triarchic model of intelligence, competence is a product of innate ability, social and physical environment, and experience, such that intelligence is "mental activity directed toward purposive adaptation to, and selection and shaping of, real-world environments relevant to one's life" (Sternberg 1985:45). In order to understand intelligence it is necessary to understand the contexts in which intelligent behaviors occur. These contexts or environments are culture specific and related to not only ecological variables, but also to issues of style that result from culture. Does the culture reward or sanction the individual who stands out? Is it considered better to respond quickly to stimuli or is slow, thoughtful reflection highly valued? Intelligence is

not merely behavior or cognitive processes. The intertwining of the two presents researchers with methodological difficulties. Cognitive processes can only be observed by observing behavior that must then serve as a proxy for mental processes. Sternberg believes that the mental processes are universal, but that they cannot be measured independent of context.

Experience or the lack of experience is also an aspect of intelligent functioning. It differs from context in that the degree of experience with a particular task can be measured cross-culturally. Often the most critical aspects of intelligent functioning are tacit rather than explicit (Wagner and Sternberg 1984). That is, they are not openly expressed. They have to do with *knowing how* to attack a problem or attain a goal rather than with possessing *specific skills.* Experience plays a large part in the development of this practical, informal, and not directly taught knowledge. Much of the behavior that Inuit associate with intelligence, as I hope to demonstrate, falls into the category of tacit knowledge. Inuit children, as well as other Arctic and sub-Arctic peoples, learn through observation and experimentation and are expected to draw their own conclusions. Rarely are they given step-by-step instructions or told if they have arrived at the correct solution (Bodenhorn 1997:127).

Gardner's ([1983]1993) theory of multiple intelligences is more radical than that of Sternberg. According to Gardner there is no single intelligence; rather, intelligences are involved in all human abilities and all human abilities are aspects of one or more distinct intelligences. Most abilities depend upon several intelligences. Gardner has identified seven distinct areas of competence or intelligences; however, he believes others may exist. These seven are linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. In the West, the first three are commonly thought of as part of a general intelligence. The last four rarely are.

According to the theory of multiple intelligences, "an intelligence is an ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Gardner [1983]1993:x). The seven intelligences are rooted in biology and, therefore, are universal human potentials that are acted upon by culture. As a consequence some potentials may be more valued and encouraged in one society while different intelligences are valued and developed in another. In addition to a biological basis, Gardner relies upon the existence of several other criteria for the identification of an intelligence. These include the isolation of the competence in particular regions of the brain such that brain injury could cause the loss of only that intelligence, the existence of geniuses, an identifiable core set of operations related to the intelligence, and encoding in a symbol system. Not all of these criteria are met for each of the seven, but most are satisfied, and Gardner ([1983] 1993:63) sees some of the criteria as more crucial than others.

The central aspect of both of the theories of intelligence is the concept of competence and adaptation. Several of the competencies that are highly valued in Holman correspond to the intelligences defined by Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. These are spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and the two personal intelligences. There is some ethnohistoric evidence to suggest that linguistic intelligence may have been important in the past, and it is likely to gain renewed importance in the near future.

Competence in a Copper Inuit Community

Among the contemporary Inuit of Holman, as in all societies, competent behavior varies with age and with gender. A primary goal of child rearing is the training of children to become successful adults. Much of what we know about Inuit child-rearing practices and what we think we understand about the psychological underpinnings of Inuit behavior come from the writings of Jean Briggs (1970, 1990, 1991, 1998). The Utkuhikhalingmiut (Chantrey Inlet Inuit) and the Qipisamiut (Cumberland Sound Inuit), whom Briggs observed, live well to the east of the Holman region and have somewhat different histories than the Ulukhaktokmiut (Holman Inuit). All three groups were isolated from each other until very recently. Nonetheless, both the content of child socialization and adult emotional expression recorded by Briggs in the 1960s and 1970s were very similar to Condon's and my observations in Holman during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As Briggs (1998:7) notes, there was striking uniformity in child socialization practices and goals "across Inuit time and space-from Alaska to Greenland, among groups that had not been in contact for generations or centuries." These deeply ingrained patterns included a high value placed upon industry, innovation, patience, and especially emotional evenness. By the late 1980s and early 1990s it was apparent that behaviors and some values, including those related to intelligence, were shifting. Given the rapid pace of social and economic change in the North, it is not surprising that contemporary Inuit hold contradictory sets of values and that the values espoused do not fully match the behaviors exhibited. Rather, people exhibit a contradictory consciousness (Gramsci 1971:333). Whether behavioral changes precede or follow those of values is not relevant. Both, however, are in flux. This is illustrated by observations of a Holman woman in her mid-thirties.

> Carol[2] told me about going to the new hockey arena for the first time during this year's playoffs. She said that at first she was very shocked and surprised by the fighting (physical) and the name calling that occurred between "cousins," both spectators and players. However, after a few days of listening to it

(and even commenting publicly that it was "not right"), she found herself yelling and screaming, too. Carol said she had to laugh at herself for behaving in this way. [Stern field journal, 1993]

The Inuit concept most relevant to the issue of intelligence is *ihuma,* which is the intellectual faculty "that makes it possible for a person to respond to his surroundings, physical and social, and to conform to social expectations" (Briggs 1970:359). This is primarily the way the English word *smart* is used in the contemporary vernacular spoken in Holman. Smart people are those who act in a rational, socially appropriate manner and are able to understand and deal with large and small problems. There is a critical emotional component of Inuit intelligence such that

a person who has (or uses) ihuma is cheerful but not giddy. He is patient in the face of difficulties and accepts unpleasant but uncontrollable events with calmness; and he does not sulk, scold, get annoyed, or attack others physically. [Briggs 1970:360]

Children are not born with this ability, but develop it as they grow and mature. Elders, describing their earliest memories, repeatedly used a phrase that translated "when I first woke up," meaning when "I began to develop understanding."[3] Adults often discount a child's misbehavior by saying, "that kid really *can't* listen." An American or Euro-Canadian parent is more likely to assert that the child *won't* listen.

Holman residents frequently described certain actions as "smart" and referred to individuals (both adults and children) who behaved inappropriately as "needing to smarten up." Like having ihuma, being smart results in appropriate adult-like behavior. Thus, the expression "smarten up" appears to be very much like a directive to use ihuma (Briggs, personal communication). Smart behaviors included several different types of actions including solving a puzzle, fixing a broken snowmobile, teaching a baby to walk, regularly getting to work on time, knowing how and where to set fishing nets, making others feel comfortable, and especially being able to avoid conflict. "Smarten up," however, is used in a much more limited sense to refer to individuals whose actions have the potential to cause themselves or others harm.

I have attempted to distinguish among the various forms of competence or intelligence that seem to have salience for Holman Inuit. However, these separations are artificial, and I am not certain that Holman residents themselves would make these same arbitrary distinctions. I suspect that rather than viewing intelligence as several unique abilities, they are more likely to see it as sets of integrated complexes of abilities and behaviors. Thus, individuals do not line up along a continuum of less intelligent to more intelligent, but within particular contexts different sorts of intelligence (or lack of intelligence) make themselves apparent. Underlying each of these intelligences is the ability to observe, interpret, and negotiate the social and physical landscape.

Creative Intelligence

Creativity and innovation appear to be among the most highly valued cognitive abilities for Holman Inuit. They are valued, I believe, in all realms of activity, but I will offer just a few examples. During the fall of 1987, upon returning to Holman following a five-year absence, I was visiting and drinking tea with Jane, a young mother. An extremely gregarious person, Jane was filling me in on many of the changes that had occurred since our last visit to Holman. Her recitation centered primarily on the numerous children who had been born in the preceding five years. She described with admiration the method another young mother, Sarah, had used to "teach" her infant to crawl. This involved placing the child on the floor across the room from an open bag of potato chips. Jane contrasted this mother's behavior with that of the infant's grandmother, who she said, was "always carrying the baby around." About the potato chip method, Jane remarked, "Sarah is really smart like that!" (Stern field journal, 1987–88).

Art is another method for individuals to demonstrate their creativity. As do a number of Canadian Arctic communities, Holman has an active, well-established arts industry. It is known primarily for its annual print collection and for whalebone and musk ox horn sculptures. Several community members support themselves and their families with income derived from artwork. Many others supplement their incomes with art. Aside from the creativity that is inherent in any art production, Holman artists have been forced by limited materials and the absence of formal training to be technically innovative. Today, Holman prints are made with mylar stencils. The first stenciled prints made in the 1960s were done using a sealskin template shaved with a razor, a fine screen and an inked toothbrush (Condon 1996:149). And according to Mabel Nigiyok:

In 1981 I started working at the print shop. When I first walked in there I didn't know what to do. At that time, Elsie Klengenberg and I were working together. We didn't have any training. We learned by watching other people working and finishing up their work which was supposed to be done. At that time there were no shadings on the prints. Elsie and I would discuss how to put shadings on them, and it was the first time there was a change in the prints. [cited in Condon 1996:180]

Sculpture from musk ox horn is a relatively recent innovation. Until the mid-1980s, the hunting of musk oxen was tightly regulated by the Canadian government due to low numbers and fear of extinction. However, in recent years, the population of musk oxen has soared and there is no longer any concern over extinction. Unfortunately, musk ox meat is considered inferior in taste to caribou meat and is taken only when caribou are not available. Musk ox do

have a number of advantages, however. The fine guard hairs are a prized (and pricey) wool that is often sold, and with modest effort the horns can be made into sculpture. Credit for discovering (or rediscovering, since there were musk ox horn implements aboriginally) how to "carve" musk ox horn goes to another Holman woman. By heating the horn it may be shaped into the form of a bird, usually a swan or crane. Eyes are inserted or etched into the piece. Sometimes wings are cut and bent. The bird is then mounted on a stone base. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, this innovator is highly praised. Many people in Holman adopted her technique and added their own variations. During February 1988 several musk ox horn pieces from Holman were shown in galleries in Edmonton with prices ranging from $700 to $1,500 Can.

The examples of innovation I have presented might be considered trivial, but provide confirmation that creativity in everyday life is not only accepted, but is desired and encouraged. Briggs (1991) musters convincing evidence that creative thinking about the potentials of people and things is the norm and results from endless experimentation, observation, and self-testing (the experiential component of intelligence cited by Sternberg). In the past, and still today, a quick, calm, and often innovative solution is needed to avert disaster. There are numerous examples of individuals caught away from home by a sudden blizzard or a snowmobile breakdown.

> At 2:30 we were on the trail, but my [Collings's] machine was stalling out when idling, and David's was taking on snow through a vent hole by the clutch wheel. We would later have to stop and fix that problem near Kangoak's Lake, but for now we were happy to get going. . . . [S]now was falling and conditions were near white out, and these conditions continued to Kangoak's Lake, where we found Walter's and Jonas' [families]. Walter looked at my machine and said, "ice in the gas line" and went back to fishing. We drove up into the hills, and David stalled out from snow in his machine, and we had to rest for a ½ hour before it would start again. In the meantime, David worked on clearing the ice from around his clutch wheel and drilling holes in the body of his machine. He was using his mother's *Ski-doo MX,* which was missing the vent cover—David says his brother lost it somewhere and never replaced it. David got out his knife, cut a piece of plywood from his sleds, and drilled holes in the plywood and in the body of the ski-doo (which was plastic) and tied the plywood over the hole using some nylon cord. We had coffee and then started up and moved out. We drove over to Uyaraktok and then to Memo's Lake, stopping once to alter the idling speed of my machine. . . . The weather was still funny, and it was still snowing lightly, but visibility was better, and David spotted a herd of musk ox across the lake. . . . David later told me that he had been thinking about turning back when the snow was falling heavily and visibility was bad and his machine conked out, but he decided to keep going because he really wanted a musk ox. [Condon and Collings hunting activities journal, October 26, 1992]

Being able to innovate with the materials at hand can mean survival. It may be a bit of a stereotype, but while an American mechanic is likely to use an entire workshop's worth of tools; many of the Inuit mechanics I have observed tend to manage with a hammer and a pair of visegrips. Nelson (1969:378) provides several other examples of the creative use of materials.

Bodily Kinesthetic Intelligence

Physical skills, too, form an aspect of intelligent behavior. Children are encouraged to walk early, to learn to control their bowels and bladders (usually before age two), and to develop physical skills. Hunters compete to see who can travel the farthest and the fastest. Pregnant women are told by their mothers and grandmothers to remain physically active (Stern and Condon 1995:25). Children are rarely discouraged from testing the limits of their physical abilities.

> After a while Kimberly and I went to Donald and Mary's house. Donald had just finished watching the hockey game on t.v. and Mary was working on a sealskin mural. At one point, Michael (their 4-year-old son) had his mother bring down a small ladder from upstairs. As he requested, she set it on the sofa so he could climb up on it. When he started to climb on it, it was rather unsteady. Donald looked at Mary and said "that kid is going to fall." Mary said, "then he'll learn not to climb up on things." When Donald said that Michael might get hurt, Mary commented that it wasn't "high enough for him to get hurt." [Condon field journal 1987–88]

By constantly testing physical limits, children and adults extend those limits. They also learn their own capacities for pain and endurance. This is of particular adaptive value in the dangerous arctic climate (Briggs 1991).

To a large extent for contemporary young men, physical prowess on the land has been replaced with physical prowess on the hockey ice. Though hunting is still valued, few young men have the skills or inclination to be full-time subsistence hunters. For many, hockey provides an opportunity to demonstrate their physical abilities (Collings and Condon 1996). Young women are avid participants in sports other than hockey. As involvement in traditional activities has lessened for young people of both sexes, sports and sports tournaments have grown in popularity.

Spatial Intelligence

Anthropologists and cognitive psychologists have long remarked upon the enhanced spatial abilities of Inuit (cf. Berry 1966, 1971; Carpenter 1955; Kleinfeld 1971; MacArthur 1968, 1973; Rasmussen 1931; Vallee 1961; Vernon 1966; and Wright et al. 1996). Especially noted in these accounts are abilities related to geographic knowledge, visual memory, map reading, and navigation.

Spatial abilities are critical for many traditional Inuit activities and continue to be relevant today. It is not certain that Inuit perceive the similarity of skills involved in activities as seemingly different as sewing and travel over the ocean ice. Both, however, require highly developed spatial abilities.

Much of the sewing that is done in Holman is done without the benefit of precut patterns. With the availability of ready-made clothing and down parkas, sewing is no longer a universal activity, but many women continue to sew new parka covers for their families at Easter and Christmas. The new garments are admired by others who take note of the workmanship of the garment and the artistry of the decoration and trim. One 27-year-old mother of four told me that she despises sewing, but that she always makes new parka covers at both holidays "because I want my family to have nice things" (Stern field journal, 1993). Her ability to make those nice things for her family permits her to demonstrate her maturity as well as her skill and, thus, enhances her status in the community.

Like sewing for women, hunting for men represents an avenue to the development of status. Hunting requires a precise understanding of the land and seascapes. Navigation skills, especially the ability to discern differences in snow and ice-covered surfaces, are critical. Some of this is taught to children explicitly through naming all of the geographical features and by constant testing (Briggs 1991: 270; Marcus 1995:107–108). Peter Collings, who traveled and hunted with Holman Inuit during parts of 1992 and 1993, found his geographical knowledge constantly tested in the same manner that a child's would be tested. Whether his traveling partner was a man in his early 30s or in his late 60s, he would invariably stop somewhere and ask Collings, "Where are we?" or "Which way is town?" (Collings, personal communication). Several young men admitted regret at their inability to hunt polar bears due to a lack of knowledge (competence) of how to read the ocean ice.

Some social scientists have attributed the highly developed visual/spatial skills of the Inuit to the ecological demands of the traditional hunting economy.

> [H]unting peoples are expected to possess good visual discrimination and spatial skill, and their cultures are expected to be supportive of the development of these skills through the presence of a high number of "geometrical spatial" concepts, a highly developed and generally shared arts and crafts production, and socialization practices whose content emphasizes independence, and self-reliance, and whose techniques are supportive and encouraging of separate development. [Berry 1971:328]

Collier (1973) and Bodenhorn (1997) suggest that it is the socialization process itself that enables Inuit to develop excellent spatial abilities. At home, children learn primarily by observing and by practicing. According to Bodenhorn (n.d.:30), in the Arctic,

> where survival literally depends on the power to notice minute details and the ability to decide what they mean, learning observational skill is of utmost importance. And the best way to observe is to be put in a situation where you have to do exactly that, not to be told what to look for.

Observational skills are called into service for another aspect of intelligence—that of social relations.

Personal Intelligences

More than any other aspects of competence, the manner in which adults comport themselves is seen as a reflection of their intelligence. When people in Holman talk about someone who is "smart" or someone who "needs to smarten up," more often than not they refer to abilities that Gardner (1983) terms *personal intelligences* and others have labeled *social intelligence.*

Personal intelligences include the ability to understand oneself, one's needs and motivations (intrapersonal intelligence), and the ability to recognize and interpret the moods, motivations, and intentions of others (interpersonal intelligence). Interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities are closely interrelated in that understanding of oneself permits understanding of others, and it is through relationships with others that individuals come to understand themselves.

In Holman, a smart person is responsible, works hard, does not make demands of others, laughs at his/her own mistakes, controls his/her emotions, avoids conflict, and without interfering anticipates the needs of others. It is a very fine balancing act for which children are socialized early (see Briggs 1998). This aspect of intelligence is viewed as a marker of maturity.

Because Holman is a small community, the skills and abilities of each person are well known. Much of what is interpreted as prestige comes from behaving correctly, and it is in this area of personal intelligence that people are most likely to share their opinions about the competence of others. This, however, is almost always done indirectly (see Brody 1975). To do otherwise would show a lack of intelligence by demonstrating "a failure to understand the symbolic meanings of indirection" (Briggs, personal communication). The use of personal names is avoided, and rarely do people engage in lengthy discussions about the abilities of others. They are more likely to say things like, "that guy really needs to smarten up" or "my uncle, he's so lazy, he never can go out hunting." As the speaker and the listener share the knowledge of whom and about what they are speaking, and presumably a common set of values, more specificity is not necessary. A request for more specificity would indicate a lack of both personal intelligence and basic abstract thinking skills on the part of the listener.

One of our teenage informants defined a "smart" person as "someone who knows everything, but doesn't show off; smart enough not to show off." Until very recently, not showing off (or calling attention to oneself) has been a marker of adult status.

> Bill tells me that he is quite proud of his son Jacob's (aged 11) hunting ability, but that he has tried to teach him never to brag about it. According to Bill, it's all right to boast a little bit in a joking way, but it should never be done to put other people down or make them feel badly. He tells his son that things like bragging eventually catches up to a person and that is why his uncle became ill and cannot hunt anymore; his bragging caught up to him. [Condon field journal 1982–83]

In the last few years bragging and showing off in the context of hockey and other sports have become common. Most men and boys between the ages of 14 and 35 are active in the hockey leagues. During the hockey season individual statistics are posted regularly to enable players to constantly compare themselves to others, and trophies are awarded at an end-of-season banquet. Hockey is widely viewed as "Bringing the Community Together" (Collings and Condon 1996), and in this context, at least, self-aggrandizing is no longer universally viewed as negative.

The age of the individual, however, is critical in judgments regarding his or her social competence. Infants and toddlers are described as "bossy" or demanding. Their desires must be indulged because they lack understanding or reason. But as they mature they are expected to develop reason. Compare two interactions between a mother and her two daughters, ages 2 and 11.

> Mary was sitting on the floor sewing some boots when Lucy (aged 2) walked up to her, unprovoked, and hit her once on the forehead. This was followed by a second blow to the face, whereupon Mary said "ouch." Even though Lucy hit her mother pretty hard, there was no attempt to physically restrain or verbally reprimand her. [Condon field journal 1982–83]

> During a dance at the community hall, for example, a mother [Mary] told her 11-year-old daughter that she was running around "like a little kid," implying that she should sit down and be quiet like her parents. The comment was made more as an observation than an ultimatum but had the desired effect. [Condon and Stern 1993:410]

In the first incident, Mary displayed calmness and restraint. In her view it would be pointless to scold a two-year-old who lacked understanding. The 11-year-old, however, did possess understanding. The mother, by presenting the girl's behavior as an observation, permitted her to choose on her own to act more adult-like. Had the child continued to run around the hall, nothing else would have been said.

Stealing and fighting are also indicators of a lack of intelligence. One young man attributed the theft of two foxes from his traps to the fact that "some people were just getting stupid." Another incident related to this has to do with a fight that occurred in the context of a game of street hockey. Two boys on the same team, one 18 years old and his uncle who was a year older, got into a fight during the game. The nephew knocked down the uncle and began kicking him in the head until other players pulled him off. For several days, whenever the topic of the fight came up in conversation, people said that the nephew "really needed to smarten up." Even a month later the incident was not forgotten. During an informal hockey match between older and younger players, one 22-year-old player told the nephew that he was playing on the wrong side and that he "should play with the juniors." It was a subtle reference to the nephew's lack of maturity.

That event occurred in 1987. Older adults continue to regard fighting as a lack of the intelligence associated with maturity, but as hockey has become more institutionalized in Holman, fights have become more common. It is not unusual for a fight that occurred on the ice to continue off the ice or for a simmering conflict to erupt into a fight during a hockey match. I do not wish to suggest that hockey is responsible for this change in behavior, but rather that traditional mechanisms for resolving conflict—avoidance, forgiveness, joking—are less effective in a permanent community of 400. Consequently, expressing hostility has become more common and perhaps more acceptable.

During my 1993 fieldwork, Suzanne, a mother in her mid-30s with three children between the ages of 14 and 5, described her philosophy of child rearing. She said that she had recently observed another mother forcing her child to apologize to another child. Suzanne told the second mother not to be so directive. According to Suzanne the mother should "just leave the kid alone" and eventually the child "would smarten up." It is interesting that Suzanne chose to question the motivations of another adult while espousing a philosophy of non-interference.

For elders, a good memory is an aspect of intelligence and wisdom. As Frank Kuptana put it, "Sometimes I forget parts of my life, and some parts I remember as though I am so smart" (cited in Condon 1996:89). Many elders speak of having received wisdom from their elders in the form of stories and of their own desires to pass this knowledge onto their children and grandchildren. Having a good memory in itself, however, does not make an individual intelligent or wise. But intelligence is ascribed to those who are able to share accumulated knowledge (Bodenhorn 1997) without unduly imposing on others. According to Patrick Attungana, an Iñupiaq man from Point Hope:

> From the Eskimos of the past, the Eskimos had like a covenant, the Eskimos had this: two, five people, who were very intelligent, who had good perception, who had good memory; this has been going on for a long time among the Eskimo, from our ancestors. And today, they are like our books, those kind of people. The ones very intelligent, the ones with good memories, the ones who are very perceptive, because they are like books to the Eskimos; you can hunt whales, you can hunt today because of this. [Attungana 1986:18–20]

Holman elders complain that they are sometimes frustrated in their efforts to share their knowledge by a disinterested audience. An attempt by teachers to include lessons on Inuit language and culture in the school curriculum was actively opposed by the older students.

> According to John (a white teacher), many of the grade 7–9 boys openly declared that they thought it was garbage.... One young boy actually said that "those old people were stupid to live like that." Another boy said, "we don't have to know that stuff 'cause we don't live like that now." [Condon field journal 1982–83]

The above may merely reflect the rebellion and the absence of ihuma of a few adolescents, but their (temporary?) rejection of things Inuit means that they lost opportunities to develop many traditional skills. Because they do not have those skills, they are unable today as parents to transmit them to their own children. A number of young adults speak regretfully of their lack of knowledge, particularly with regard to language, and several were instrumental in establishing more effective Inuit language classes as part of the school curriculum.

In the first years following the establishment of a year-around settlement, parents rarely exercised control over the activities of children and teens. In the pre-settlement, camp period there were few opportunities for children to interact with people other than members of their extended families. Adults did not need to be direct or explicit in their training of children because there were no other models. Once in the settlement, however, there were ever-increasing opportunities for children to observe and practice non-Inuit behaviors. As children spent more and more time interacting with peers and less time in direct contact with parents, the tacit learning of traditional values through observation was disrupted. The development of an adolescent peer group (Condon 1990) provided a reinforcement mechanism for imported ideas. The change has been gradual, but ongoing.

Intelligence in the Context of School

The foregoing discussion presents just a few examples of the ways that Holman Inuit discuss intelligence. I have never heard adults equate being smart with success in school. However, 18-year-old Johnny Apiuk, in response to the question "Are boys smarter than girls?" replied, "I don't know. In school, some of the girls were pretty smart, smarter than some boys" (Condon 1987:137).

Although schooling provides a different construct of intelligence and a different set of behaviors than the ones preferred by the community (see Collier 1973), people have come to regard school as important. During 1982 and 1983 Holman school attendance was among the lowest in the region. Parents not only did not force their children to attend but sometimes kept them home to help with subsistence activities or childcare. Construction of a new school and gymnasium building in 1985 coincided with increased wage employment opportunities and decreased subsistence efforts. Many of the new jobs required higher levels of schooling and/or certification. As a consequence, children wanted to attend school in order to play in the new gym, and parents encouraged them to go in order to improve their future employment prospects. The young parents of today are the first group to have attended high school. Fifteen years ago parents permitted children to decide whether or not to attend school just as they allowed children to set their own eating and sleeping schedules. In the young households today, families are likely to sit down together for a meal, homework is checked, and bedtimes are set.

Teaching the Anthropologists to Smarten Up

Informant and community cooperation are an element of every anthropological inquiry. The literature provides many examples of how "The Natives" frustrated the goals of both naive and savvy researchers. Though it is no longer the only, or perhaps even the primary, method of social anthropology, participant-observation remains an important tool. In order to participant-observe, the researcher must participate! This generally means learning to behave in an acceptable, if not completely correct (or fully competent), manner.[4] Communities generally find ways to modify or mitigate the inappropriate actions of researchers. Briggs's experiences, recounted in *Never in Anger,* provide just one example of frustrated informants frustrating the goals of the anthropologist. The manner that communities adopt in order to educate the scientist tell as much about the society as the instructions themselves.

By their words and actions, the people of Holman adopted the most appropriate manner to teach Richard Condon and me how to be smart. These included humor, avoidance, and story-telling. Often without meaning to, we demonstrated a lack of personal intelligence. How much stress this created in our relationships with people is impossible to know.

Condon first went to Holman in 1978 as a graduate student engaged in his doctoral research. He was one in a succession of *Qallunaat* (whites) who had come to Holman to conduct research, or teach, or fill one of several government posts. These individuals usually stayed a year or two (sometimes less, rarely more) and then returned south never to be seen or heard from again. It hardly paid for Inuit to take an interest in them. Condon fell into that category. People were polite and usually cooperated with his intrusive questions, but with few exceptions did not try to incorporate him in their activities. His primary visitors were teenage boys and young unmarried men. And he was very much an adolescent in the eyes of the people of Holman; he did no obvious work (unlike teachers or mechanics), but merely hung out and "talked around" with people

and he was also unmarried. Condon's return to Holman in January 1982 (and my joining him as a research assistant in June) permitted a change in his status. Many of the Qallunaat who visited Holman claimed that they would return, but up to that time, Condon was the only one who ever had. However, it was not until we returned to Holman in 1987 (his third trip, my second) married, with a two-year-old and expecting another, that people seemed to take an interest in our behavior. Thus, the examples of our socialization come from the period between August 1987 and June 1988.

"'Why?' is one of the rudest questions one can ask an Utkuhikhalingmiutaq" (Briggs 1991:267). I believe that the same can be said for the Ulukhaktokmiutaat, though perhaps "who?" is an equally stressful question. Various people let it be known what they thought of our seemingly endless questions. One young man, while flipping through a copy of *Inuit Youth,* stopped on a page containing an interview, looked up, and stated matter-of-factly, "Boy, Richard, you sure ask some funny[5] questions."

On two occasions I was present while people were drinking alcohol, but because I was pregnant, was not drinking myself. Both times a woman who had made me feel very welcome in Holman remarked in a joking tone to everyone present that I was not drinking so that I could watch and then write down everything that happened at the party.

The message that the questions had become too much was also conveyed by avoidance. "I don't know" was the convenient and culturally appropriate response to most stressful questions, but physical avoidance was also employed.

> Tom (a man in his late 50s) dropped over for tea after the meeting and we talked a bit. . . . At one point Tom mentioned that he used to live next door to David and Ann and that David had been one of his best friends. According to Tom, when David died, Ann just started to drink a lot and hasn't stopped since. I asked if David was the one who had committed suicide. I knew that he did, but just wanted to get Tom to talk a little bit about it. He said yes and I tried to pry more information out of him by saying that I didn't understand why people did stuff like that. . . . Tom just shook his head, but didn't say anything. At this point, Tom said that he had to go and left. [Condon field journal 1987–88]

Many of the lessons I was given in appropriate adult *(ihumaniq)* behavior revolved around what people in Holman undoubtedly viewed as my own incompetent parenting. Children in Holman are usually backpacked until they are about three years old. I decided that I wanted to make Kimberly (our two-year-old) a skin parka and mentioned this to one of our primary informants. Without my having to ask, she offered to help me. She cut the pieces for the parka, stitched together the fox fur trim, and showed me how to sew the skins. She also mentioned that she still sometimes backpacked her son, who was a year and a half older than Kimberly. Another woman made me a present of a woven belt used for securing a backpacked child, which she claimed was for Kimberly to play at packing a doll. Several women told me little children were warmer when they were packed and expressed the view that Kimberly would probably prefer to be carried. Meanwhile, as Kimberly wore her new parka around town, nearly every woman asked who had made it and then examined the quality of my stitches.

The hardest lesson to hear, however, had to do with the manner in which we interacted with Kimberly. Like most American parents, we were fairly directive: often told her to be careful, made sure she napped regularly, controlled her schedule and her access to "dangerous" objects. We wanted her to behave in the same ways that other middle-class American preschoolers were taught to behave. Sometimes we were more successful than at other times. There were temper tantrums, and sometimes we raised our voices. Had she chosen to hit me in a fit of temper as described above, it is likely that my reaction would have been markedly different from that of Mary. The battles of will and occasional yelling, however, became common knowledge around town.

One of the topics that we investigated that year had to do with child-rearing practices. We conducted formal interviews, but we also found that once people understood what sorts of information we wanted it was often volunteered during social visits. On two separate occasions women in their late 20s chose to tell me about child-rearing advice they had received from their mothers and grandmothers. Both said they had "always heard" that yelling at a child causes the child to lose the ability to listen.

The examples of lessons that I have recounted are clearly the ones that had salience for us. These were cases where we were ready to hear the messages embedded in the stories or the jokes. By presenting what was obviously advice in those forms, people were able to impart their views without the discomfort or fear of offending us that might have resulted from a more direct approach. We could hear the advice without either having to acknowledge it or question it. We were not expected to defend our actions and never did a discussion of our particular situation result. We were free to accept or ignore their suggestions. There may have been many more times when people tried to instruct us, but those lessons were lost in the subtlety of the teaching method and our own insensitivities.

Conclusions

In modern Inuit communities there are many choices for children and adults. Most households depend upon some form of wage employment. This usually requires skills that are very different from those needed for subsistence work. Much of the new work requires behaviors that are antithetical to the traditional values of non-interference and non-

demandingness that is such a critical component of traditional intelligence in Holman. While this is especially obvious for Inuit social workers, teachers, and law enforcement officers, shop and office managers, recreation directors, and health aides also find that they must supervise and direct the activities of others. Thus, it is often necessary to situationally suspend traditional sensibilities regarding intelligence in order to be effective in the new economic regime. The small size of the community means that nearly every resident has occasions to interact with all other individuals in their work roles. Partly as a result of these new roles, opportunities for conflict have increased. However, the broader, underlying values that provide the backdrop for the development of skills have been slower to change and have created emotional stresses. This may be one factor that has contributed to the growing acceptability of bragging and explicit competition in the context of sports. Skills such as the ability to read the ocean ice, to recognize changing weather conditions, or to cut and sew a parka without a pattern remain highly valued, but they are no longer essential. Few young adults in Holman can claim expertise in these traditional areas. And few older adults are comfortable with the social demands of wage labor work. Prestige does not appear to be related to having a job or relying on the subsistence economy, but rather on doing either (or both) well.

Traditional meanings of intelligence have not disappeared. People of all ages tend to talk about being smart in much the same ways. However, as is often the case in societies undergoing transition, behavior does not always match the rhetoric. As the community becomes more bureaucratic and as greater numbers of children who have received formal schooling reach adulthood, this is one area of inquiry that will deserve a second look.

Notes

Acknowledgments. In writing I have made extensive use of fieldnotes made by the late Richard Condon, who was my friend and partner for nearly fifteen years. His initial fieldwork in Holman was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (MN075508-01), the Arctic Institute of North America, and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Our joint research on adolescence was supported by the William T. Grant Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health (MN14066-07), and the National Science Foundation (BNS-8614574). More recently, data collection was enabled by grants from the National Science Foundation (OPP-9110708) and several Canadian Studies Faculty Research grants. Douglas Behrend, John W. Berry, Jean Briggs, Nelson Graburn, Bill Jankowiak, Elizabeth Lamb, John Ogbu, Donna Rosh, George Wenzel, and one anonymous reviewer read and commented on earlier versions of this paper. Whatever shortcomings remain are my own.

1. Inuinnaqtun is one of the two dialects of Inuktitut spoken in Holman. The other, Inuvialuqtun, is spoken by very few members of the community. It would be convenient to blame this language loss on either television or schooling, but the empirical evidence fails to support this view. The language loss occurred prior to the introduction of television and Inuktitut continues to be a child's first language in most, if not all, of the Inuit communities to the east of Holman. If anything, the recent introduction of television programming in Inuktitut has helped sustain the language in Holman.

2. All of the personal names that occur without surnames are pseudonyms.

3. Briggs (personal communication) pointed out that Athabaskans seem to have a similar understanding of the development of cognition; see, for example, Cruikshank (1990:315).

4. As noted previously, Holman Inuit do not always adhere to community norms either.

5. In the Holman vernacular of English, *funny* does mean both "strange" and "humorous," but more often connotes "uncomfortable."

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Child Development, Vol. 52, No. 2. (Jun., 1981), pp. 413-429.

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