Sharing a drink: altruism and group identity bind together societies such as the Nenets herders in Siberia.

Exchange

- Deals with the movement of goods (e.g., food) and services (e.g., assistance or help) between households
- Cultures have rules about who ought to give and receive under particular conditions
- These are moral rules enforced by public opinion
- In maintaining proper exchange relationship two of the worst admonitions are accusations of stinginess and laziness
  - Stinginess suggests that the person should give but does not while
  - Laziness suggest that the person is both chronically needy and/or works so little that he or she is unable to give on a regular basis or in proportion to what he or she has received

The Sociology of "Primitive Exchange": Sahlins' Model

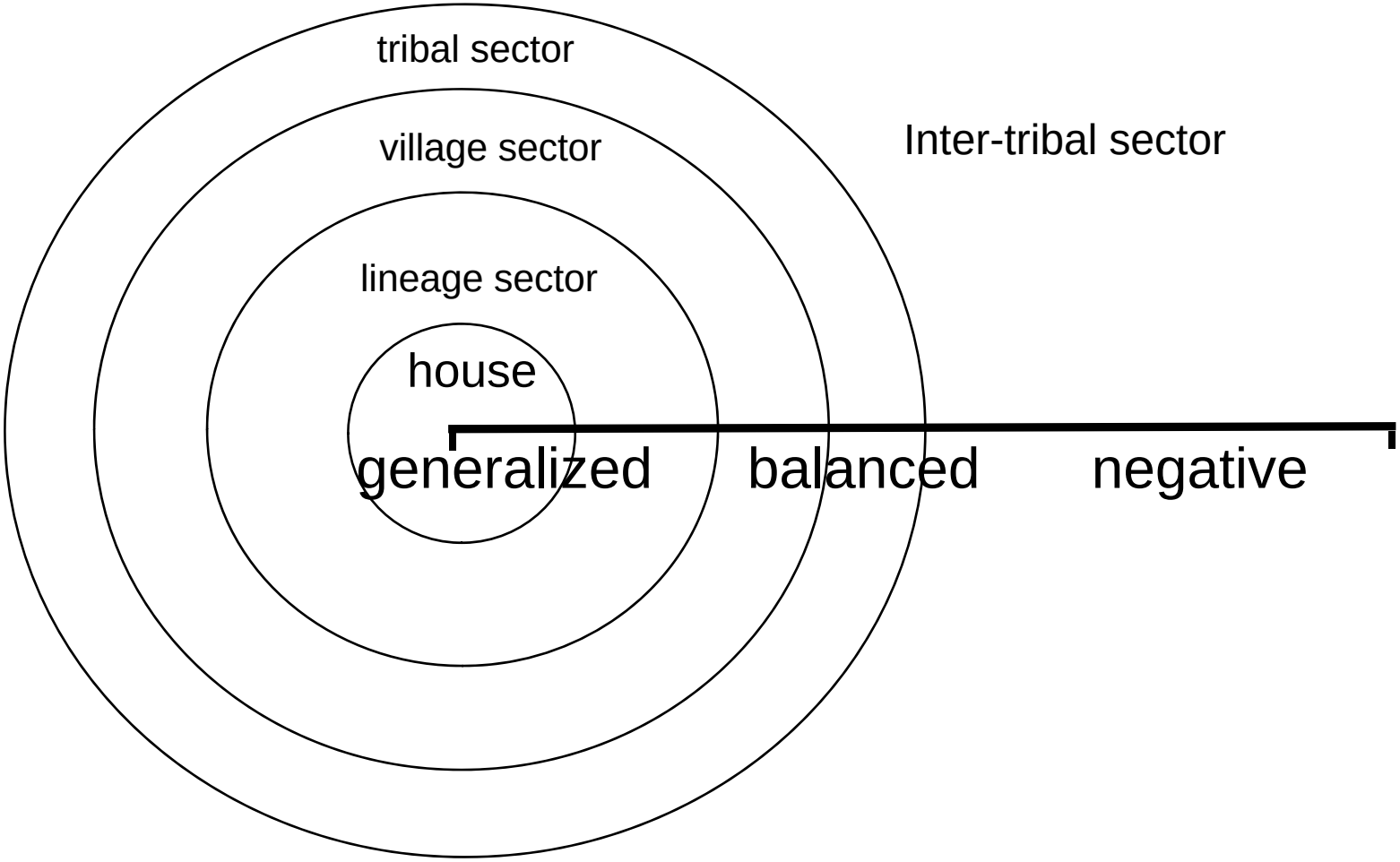
Reciprocity Type	Exchange Pattern	Typical Relationship
Generalized	A ⟶ B A ⟵ - - - B	parent-child or kin
Balanced	A ⟶ B A ⟵ B	kin or friends
Negative	A ⟶ B A ⟵ - - - B	strangers

Determinants of Reciprocity

1. kinship
2. residential propinquity

- Family members and close kin tend to engage in generalized reciprocity
- Neighbors & distant kin tend to engage in balanced reciprocity
- Unrelated individuals and strangers tend to engage in negative reciprocity (*caveat emptor*)

A Schematic of Kinship and Residence as Determinants of Reciprocity



Variation in Eskimo Sharing & Family Form

Area	West	Middle	East
Group	Copper	Netsilik	Iglulik
Environment	harsh	moderate	good
Sharing	partnerships	kin & partnerships	kin
Family Form	nuclear families	nuclear & extended	extended
Leadership	nuclear family head	*inhumataq*	strong *inhumataq*

Attitudes in Sharing Commonly Found in Foraging Societies

"*You must not thank for your meat; it is your right to get parts. In this country, nobody wishes to be dependent on others. Therefore, there is nobody who gives or gets gifts, for thereby you become dependent. With gifts you make slaves just as with whips you make dogs."*

Told to Peter Fruechen after he thanked an Inuit man for giving him a share of seal meat (*Book of the Eskimos*, Page 154, 1961)

San Belittling of the Meat

- "Yes, when a young man kills much meat he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. This way we cool his heart and make him gentle".
- Told to ethnographer Richard Lee. *The Ju/'hoansi*, page 156. (1979)

Widespread Sharing of Large Game

- In most societies where large game is taken a successful hunter is required to distribute it to all members of the group.
- In general,
  - the one who killed the animal usually may not consume any part and may be required to allow someone else to distribute it
  - the hunter's family receives a share no greater than other families.
  - the amount received by any family is proportional to family size
  - some hunters disproportionally contribute to the group

Widespread Sharing Creates Two "Collective Action Problems"

- How does one motivate exceptional hunters to continue to provide disproportionally to the group?
  - Good hunters gain additional prestige which may lead to additional mating opportunities (e.g., more wives) or their families are better treated.
- What's to stop other hunters from "free riding", or hunting less or refusing to share? A first order collective action problem.
  - insulting accusations of laziness or stinginess
  - loss of sharing rights
  - loss of allies or group support
- Who is going to bear the costs of enforcement? A second order collective action problem
  - Someone must bear the costs (punishing) of dealing with cheaters

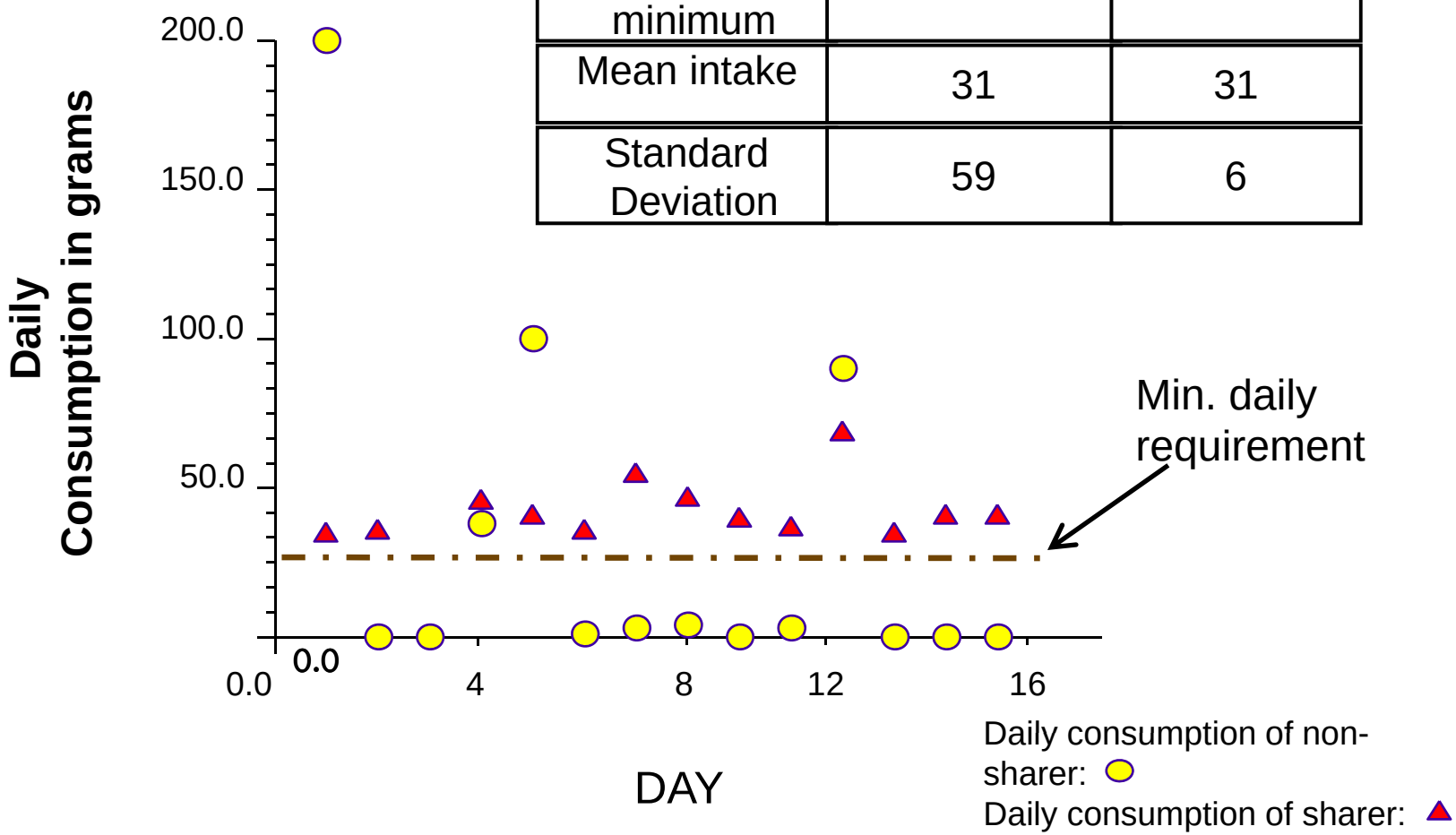
Why is widespread sharing of game adaptive?

- Animal flesh has the following attributes
  - A minimum level of protein must be consumed regularly to maximize health*
  - Protein cannot be stored for long by the body. If intake is in excess of needs then it is converted to glucose.
  - Animal protein also contains fat which is an excellent energy source and contains important fatty acids.
- The problem with high quality protein is that one needs to get it through hunting but hunting success is extremely variable (unlike gathering or gardening)
  - For example, in many groups hunters fail to bring back sufficient food for their families 50%-80% of the times they go hunting.
- The figure on the following page shows that a hunter who does not share fails to meet his daily protein requirements on 10 of 16 days even though his mean intake is equal to the hunter who shares. The hunter who shares never fails to meet his minimum needs.

*Unless one has a well-balanced source of foods a vegan or vegetarian diet is probably impossible for tribal peoples.

Daily protein consumption of sharers and non-sharers over 16 days

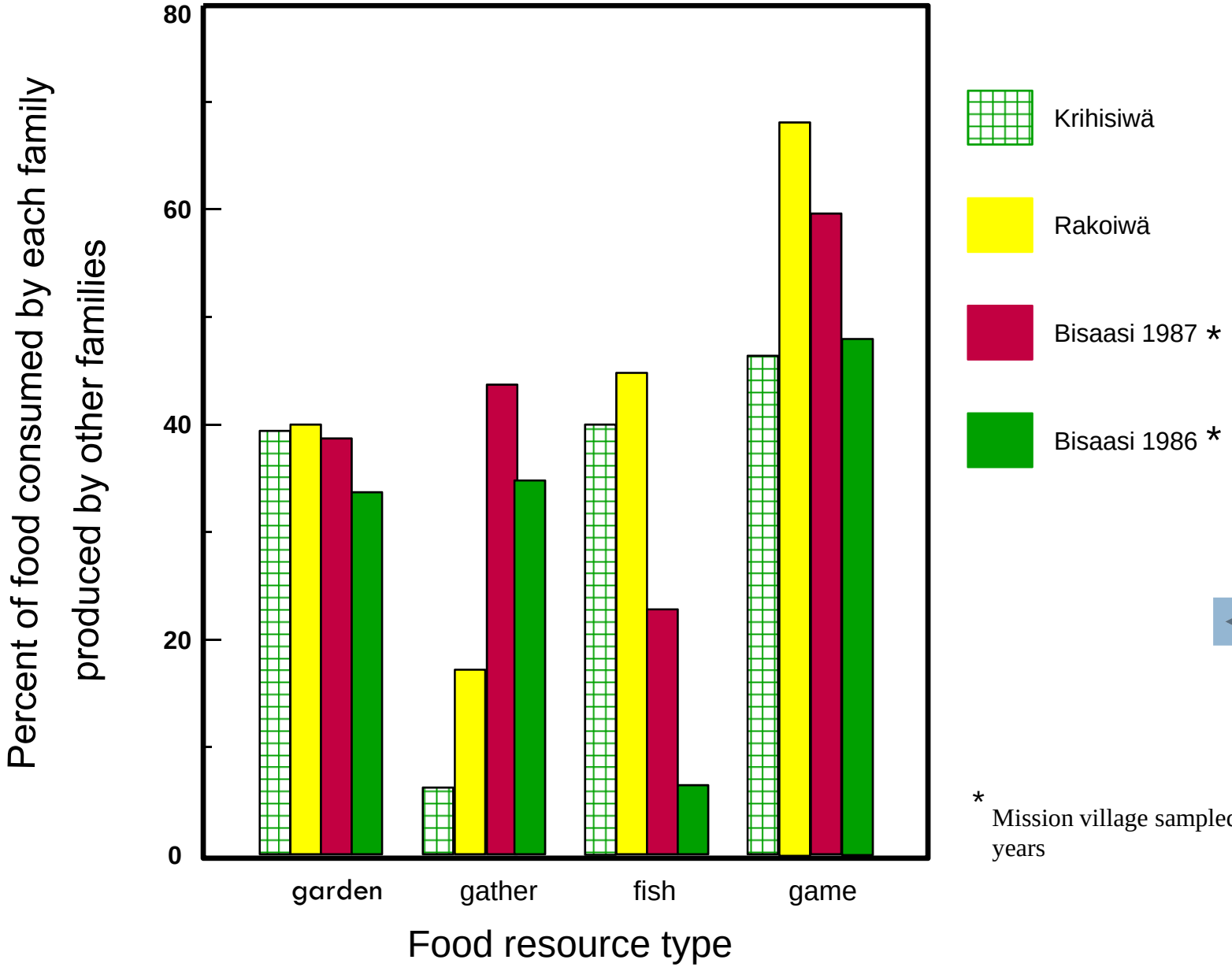
	No Sharing	Sharing
Days Failed to achieve minimum	10	0
Mean intake	31	31
Standard Deviation	59	6



Some Generalizations about Yanomamö Food Exchange

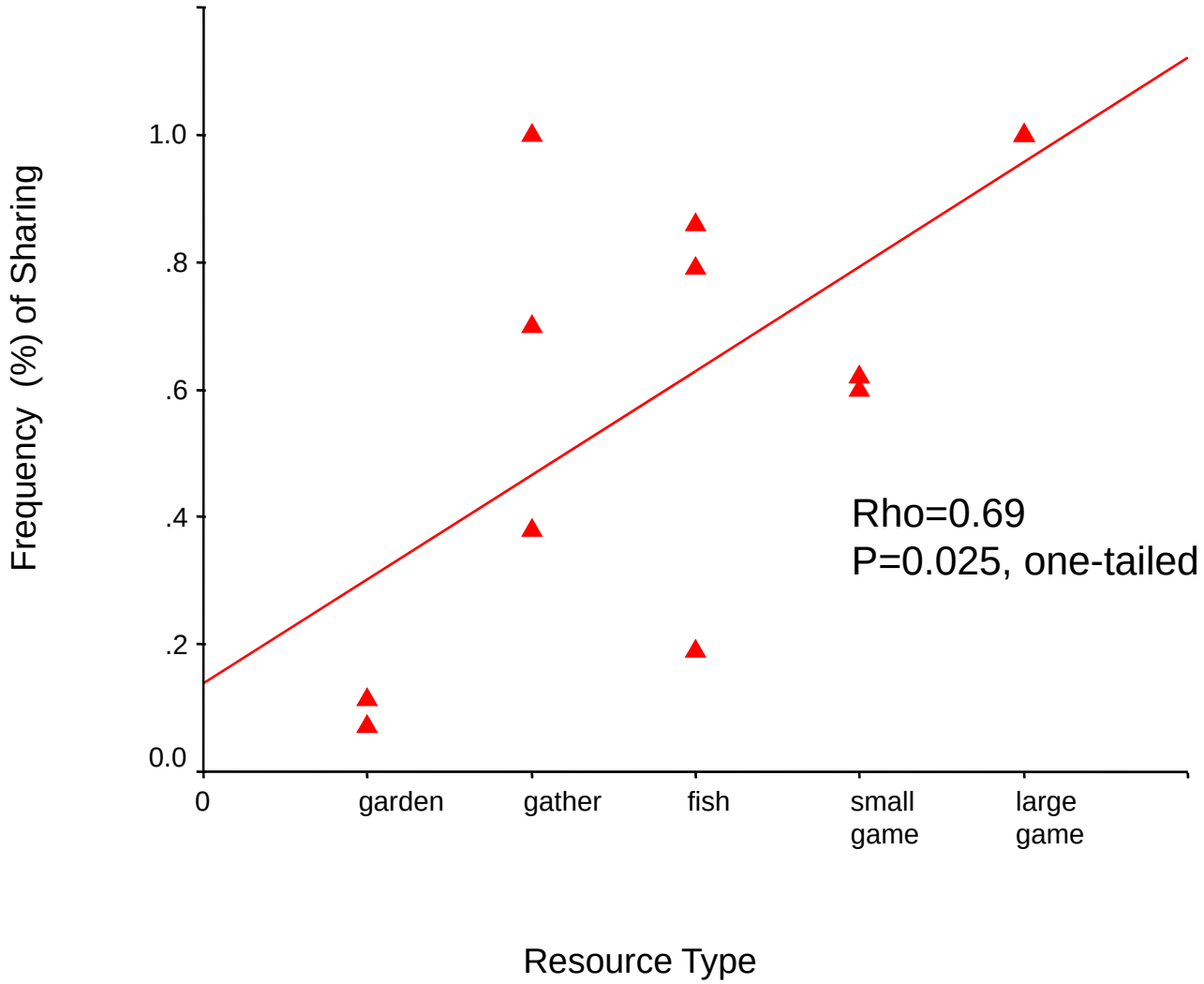
- Approximately 35-40% of all food consumed by a family was given to them by other families.
- Hard to acquire food resources (game) tend to be more widely shared than easy to acquire foods (garden produce).
- Sharing functions to reduce the variance in the consumption of risky food resources and this leads to a superior dietary intake.

Patterns of Food Sharing in Four Yanomamö Villages



* Mission village sampled in different years

Frequency of Exchange



Scope of Sharing