

Rob Boyd and Pete Richerson have identified two biases, one based on success, the other on prestige, that might influence which individual is most imitated. If you were living in a foraging society, would you rather imitate prestigious hunters or successful ones? Successful ones, you say? It may not be so easy or so argue Kim Hill and Keith Kintigh in "Can Anthropologists Distinguish Good and Poor Hunters? Implications for Hunting Hypotheses, Sharing Conventions, and Cultural Transmission" by (in Current Anthropology Volume 50, Number 3, June 2009) available [here](#).

Here is the Abstract:

Numerous articles examine the relationship between men's hunting skill and other important biological and social traits. We analyzed more than 14,000 hunter days during 27 years of monitoring the Ache of Paraguay by using resampling methods to demonstrate that large sample sizes are generally required in order to distinguish individual men by hunting skill. A small published study on !Kung hunters shows that large-game hunters are even more difficult to distinguish by individual skill level. This is a serious problem because regressions using noisy hunting data as the independent variable systematically underestimate the association of hunting ability with other biosocial traits. The analysis suggests that some coresidents in many small-scale societies will be unable to accurately distinguish hunters by skill level, possibly favoring groupwide meat-sharing conventions and biased cultural transmission that emphasizes prestige rather than perceived hunting skill.