

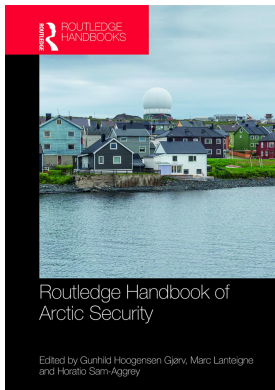
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### **Indigenous security theory**

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# 7

## INDIGENOUS SECURITY THEORY

### Intersectional analysis from the bottom up

*Rauna Kuokkanen and Victoria Sweet*

Conventional understandings of state security that are maintained through the military and characterized by protecting borders, institutions, and people from external aggressors are not only largely irrelevant, but often antithetical, to Indigenous conceptions of security. For some Arctic Indigenous peoples, the language of security is relatively new, but there are a number of issues that have long been considered a threat to their collective survival, including environmental protection, preservation of Indigenous identities and economies, as well as restoring political autonomy and Indigenous rights (Deiter and Rude 2005; EKOS 2011; Exner-Pirot 2012; Greaves 2012, 2016). Arctic Indigenous peoples who have employed security discourse have established the connection between (ongoing) colonialism and the creation of insecurities, including environmental change (Nickels et al. 2013). More recent concerns deal specifically with climate change, food security, and related issues of traditional knowledge, traditional ways of life, and health (Cameron 2012; Greaves 2012; ICC Canada 2012; Kuhnlein et al. 2014; Sejersen 2015).

This chapter is informed by “a bottom-up” human security theory that defines security “from the position of those who are most insecure” (Hoogensen Gjørv 2014: 59). In the Arctic, Indigenous women are among the least secure. Drawing on existing literature, this chapter conceptualizes Indigenous security by taking its cue from Indigenous women in the Arctic who have articulated the key aspects of security as food, shelter, and individual and collective safety. According to Rosemary Kuptana, former president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “[S]ecurity to Inuit was, and is, having food, clothing and shelter” (Kuptana 2013: 11–12). This chapter also conceives Indigenous security as necessarily informed by feminist analysis. Surveys have shown that in the Arctic, women and men not only experience security differently but also consider different issues a priority when identifying security (EKOS 2011). It has been suggested that “[T]o talk about security without thinking about gender is simply to account for the surface reflections without examining what is happening deep down below the surface” (Booth 1997: 101). Without a feminist analysis of gender, the understanding of relations of power and domination remains weak and incomplete.

Notably, however, a gendered human security analysis does not imply a sole focus on women. Gendered human security analyses expose relations of domination that otherwise are frequently rendered either insignificant or invisible. It enables us “to identify the ways in

which insecurities develop as a result of relationships of dominance/nondominance, [and] how they manifest themselves according to context” (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006: 219). The intersection of feminist and Indigenous approaches to human security will deepen the discourse, highlight the voice of the least heard but most greatly impacted group in the Arctic, and increase the likelihood that Arctic security discussions will lead to definitive steps to promote well-being for all.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first considers existing research on Indigenous security. The second examines three interrelated concerns of Indigenous security: food, shelter, and individual/collective safety. The third examines the relationship between Indigenous security and self-determination, arguing that without addressing gender in general and violence against Indigenous women specifically, Indigenous self-government arrangements do not advance Indigenous security. In conclusion, the chapter identifies future directions in Indigenous security research in the Arctic.

### **Indigenous security studies and human security in the Arctic**

Human security challenges conventional definitions of state security as being too narrow, elitist, masculinist, and state-centered.<sup>1</sup> A more robust conception of human security has drawn attention to the silencing and exclusion of gendered forms of violence in the mainstream security discourse. It has exposed the asymmetric relations of power and domination of security, and shown how security itself is gendered (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). While many feminist scholars applaud the bottom-up approach, others maintain that human security is still patriarchal and military-focused because of the implications associated with the term security, the power structures within societal structures, and the tendency to focus on institutions and organizations instead of human relationships and human needs (McKay 2004). Despite these reservations, arguments have been made that the Arctic is a particularly appropriate place to transition security discussions to the human security framework because of the unique conditions and needs that exist: particularly climate-related insecurities (Goloviznina and Hoogensen Gjørv 2014; Sweet 2014a).

For example, many of the emerging security concerns are directly related to climate change. These changes are dramatically impacting the circumpolar Arctic region, but may not be as noticeable in other parts of countries with Arctic territory. Using only a state-centered approach, the leadership of each country might overlook the needs of the peoples living in the Arctic regions because their needs are so different from the rest of the country. The only way to ensure that these concerns are given proper weight is to apply a human-centered approach and allow the citizens to effectively address concerns distinct to their region (Sweet 2014a). Also, the Arctic is fairly politically stable. This creates the perfect circumstances for focusing security discussions on human-centered concerns (Hoogensen Gjørv et al. 2009).

In addition to the gendered arguments, questions have been raised about the cultural appropriateness of a human security approach. Notably absent in most of the Arctic human security discourse is the voice of Indigenous peoples. The perspective of Indigenous women on security is particularly under-studied. This is especially concerning when discussing human security in the Arctic, since the circumpolar Arctic region is home to many Indigenous communities.

### **Significance of Indigenous voices in security discourse**

The Arctic is home to more than 400,000 Indigenous people who belong to 50 different nations, including the Inuit, Sámi, Athabaskan, Dene, Chukchi, Nenets, and others. These

groups have historically enjoyed political autonomy and for generations have practiced their subsistence economies, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, and reindeer herding. Several authors have made the case that only by including Indigenous voices in security conversations will true security in the Arctic be realized. Slowey made the assertion that Indigenous people will not be fully secure until their environmental as well as social, personal, and community needs are fulfilled, and this can only occur with self-governance structures that allow for a strong voice in all discussions (Slowey 2014). A similar position was taken by Hossain when he explained that no country is truly secure when any portion of the population remains insecure, and that the one way to provide this security is through acknowledging the right to environment and the right to development and addressing these rights by guaranteeing self-determination for Indigenous peoples in the Arctic (Hossain 2015). The discourse of Indigenous self-determination, however, needs to be gendered in order to understand and further analyze the positions of domination and nondomination and how they manifest in Indigenous communities. We will discuss this at the end of the chapter.

Others have pointed out the relevance of Indigenous voices in security discourses (Simon 1989; Stern 2006; Zellen 2009) and how including community voices in these conversations empowers individuals and communities to make informed choices and act on their own behalf (Indian Law and Order Commission 2013; Ogata and Cels 2003). Greaves compared the different approaches of the Inuit and the Sámi and theorized why one group chose to phrase environmental concerns as a security issue and the other group does not discuss environmental concerns in this manner (Greaves 2016). This serves as an important reminder that not all Indigenous perspectives will be aligned and no single approach to incorporating Indigenous voices will be sufficient. No single approach to Indigenous security in the Arctic will ever be appropriate.

In addition to focusing on engaging community voices, a number of scholars have made an effort to discuss concerns related specifically to Indigenous women, including gendered violence and political participation (Irlbacher-Fox et al. 2014; Stuvøy and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2009; Sweet 2014a, 2014b). Reports have noted the lack of governmental and societal response to these concerns (Amnesty International 2004; Indian Law and Order Commission 2013). Some literature related to extractive industry development explores safety concerns beyond personal safety. Many extractive industry projects have polluted or destroyed the environment. This contamination impacts Indigenous women more dramatically than the men from the same communities (Archibald and Crnkovich 1999; Cariño 2002; Collins and Fleischman 2013; Czyzewski et al. 2014; Deiter and Rude 2005; Hall 2013).

Unfortunately, very little scholarly work has been published from the personal perspective of Indigenous women in the Arctic. While it is necessary to continue the general dialogue to remind policymakers that Indigenous voices must be at the table in security discussions, in order to fully understand how Indigenous women might define security from their own perspectives, Indigenous women's concerns and needs must be expressed and heard. In recent years, a few examples of such expressions have begun to appear. Inuit leader Sheila Watt-Cloutier expressed that the fight to protect the environment is about more than environmental security: it is a fight to protect her people's way of life and culture (Watt-Cloutier 2015). While the environmental security approach has been a useful vehicle for raising awareness, the Indigenous perspective goes beyond the idea of existing on the Earth to include the idea of being part of their surrounding territories. Thus, it could be argued that security from the perspective of Indigenous women goes deeper and is more personal than someone who does not share this worldview might understand.

### ***Food security in the Arctic***

Food security is a concept that refers to a broad set of social, economic, and physical conditions related to access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food (FAO 2004). Food security was identified as a critical area for concern by the World Economic Forum's 2012 Global Risks Report (WEF 2012). The food system is characterized by systemic power inequities in a multitude of ways, all of which are deeply gendered and have gendered consequences. Worldwide, women and girls experience greater poverty, undernourishment, and have less access to decision-making, land and capital (Patel 2012).

Food security is a critical component of Indigenous security in the Arctic. It consists of a complex set of social, economic, cultural, political, and physical conditions, all of which are deeply gendered. These include questions of sovereignty, traditional knowledge and skills, access and availability of resources and traditional food sources, environmental change and degradation, and geography (Duhaime and Bernard 2008; ICC Canada 2012; Kuhnlein et al. 2014). Significantly, Indigenous rights play a critical role in having access to traditional territories and natural resources, including traditional foods (Kuhnlein et al. 2014).

As elsewhere, the disruption of the food systems in Arctic Indigenous communities was a result of processes of colonialism and neoliberal economic globalization and has far-reaching health, social, and cultural consequences (Robidoux and Mason 2017). Growing food insecurity has fueled food sovereignty movements that seek to attain food self-sufficiency, restore local food systems and practices, and establish control and authority over them. Some have suggested that food sovereignty is a form of decolonization and continuation of anticolonial struggles (Grey and Patel 2015), while others point out that food self-sufficiency is not necessarily a realistic option for all communities (Agarwal 2014). In the Arctic, the Inuit have been at the forefront in calling for attention to the growing problem of food security in Indigenous communities. The Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada 2012 report noted:

Remoteness, limited transport infrastructure, difficult climatic conditions, high global prices for food commodities and oil all combine to make the cost of food and its distribution a significant driver of food insecurity for many Inuit communities. ... At the same time, families living in these remote communities also have to deal with the high cost of other essential commodities.

*(ICC Canada 2012: 5)*

Considerations of Indigenous food security in the Arctic are predominantly either gender-blind or biased, focusing on male practices of hunting, harvesting, and herding in spite of the fact that many women have, for generations, hunted or played other important roles in hunting (Bodenhorn 1990; Parlee 2016; Parlee et al. 2005). Gendered caretaking roles extend to animal species upon which Indigenous communities rely on in the Arctic. For example, "Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, and Sahtú women alike have responsibilities for 'taking care' of caribou that reflect women's spiritual power and their ability to influence the appearance or disappearance of caribou" (Parlee 2016: 186). Research has demonstrated that traditional knowledge and skills related to harvesting food on the land are critical factors enabling food security (e.g., Duhaime and Bernard 2008; Gombay 2010). Existing data prevents us from getting a comprehensive picture of the gender and other dynamics and structural inequalities of Indigenous food security in the Arctic.

However, there is evidence to suggest that the role of women in subsistence activities and traditional economies might be changing. For example, according to one study, young

Inuit women in Canada between the age of 15 and 24 participated the least (55%) in harvesting of traditional foods (compared to 74% of men in the same age group) (Tait 2001; see also Kuhnlein et al. 1995). What is more, income and employment play a role in accessing traditional food as money is required to purchase and operate the equipment needed to procure it (Duhaime et al. 2002; Lawn and Harvey 2001). The labor force and wage economy in the Arctic are often patterned along gender lines; more women are educated than men and they hold more permanent jobs, especially in service and public sectors (Nahanni 1992; Parlee 2016; Poppel 2005, 2014; Tróndheim 2001). It may be theorized that more women are looking for less traditional means to support food acquisition. Yet, what happens when a woman is left alone to provide for children with no willing or competent male relatives? In most Arctic areas, it takes the combination of both male and female efforts, and without male support it appears that these women suffer the most. Studies indicate that in some Arctic Indigenous communities, gendered division of labor, such as the availability and skills of a male hunter in the household, plays a large role in having access to traditional foods (Duhaime et al. 2002; Lawn and Harvey 2001).

Gendered access to traditional foods might be mitigated by food-sharing practices and community networks of reciprocity, which remain important for food security as well as cultural and intergenerational well-being in many Arctic Indigenous communities (McMillan 2011; Kuhnlein et al. 2014: 75). These practices and networks are not gender-neutral and to understand the significance of the different roles and responsibilities that men and women play vis-à-vis food security, more research needs to be done.

As elsewhere, socioeconomic and political factors have gendered consequences on food systems and food security. Access to and consumption of traditional foods remains central to security of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic. As an example, although Indigenous women hold specific land management practices and have deep, complex knowledge and skills related to gathering, using and taking care of plants and animals (Turner 2003), they “largely lack a voice in co-management decision making, and their role in household economies has been neglected in research and rarely informs policy” (Parlee 2016: 186).

Further, food insecurity is closely connected to housing insecurity, which in some Arctic Indigenous regions is particularly severe. The provision of food is among the greatest challenges faced by people with housing insecurity. This is an especially critical concern for women with children, who may have to choose to go hungry themselves in order to feed their children. Women with children are also gravely impacted by the lack of housing because without adequate accommodation, children are at risk of being apprehended (Bopp et al. 2007).

### ***Homelessness and housing insecurity***

In many Arctic communities, homelessness is an urgent problem that remains inadequately addressed. The rates of homelessness are commonly higher among Indigenous peoples than other populations. A recent report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples revealed that due to substandard homes, severe overcrowding, and a lack of adequate housing, many families in Inuit communities in Canada are “one step away from homelessness” (Dyck and Patterson 2017). A study from Nunavut identified the housing crisis, together with poverty, lack of education, and limited employment, as one of the main contributing factors in making Inuit more susceptible to human trafficking and “being lured by traffickers to move to the south to escape challenging living conditions and limited options” (Roos 2013: 40).

Severe overcrowding also results in a lack of privacy and quiet spaces for children to study, which compounds family tensions and may lead to domestic violence and child abuse (Dyck and Patterson 2017; Meyer 2005; Roos 2013). Community services, shelters or transitional housing are extremely limited or nonexistent and as a result victims are often forced to stay in abusive situations (Dyck and Patterson 2017; Enoksen 2005; Roos 2013; Schmidt et al. 2015).<sup>1</sup> Those who leave their communities due to violence and go into shelters in more urban areas are often faced with homelessness in the new setting.

Studies have illustrated how the complex web of interlocking vicious cycles can make it extremely challenging for Indigenous women to get out of housing and food insecurity. There are regional differences; for example, in Nunavut, rapid population growth, and, in the Northwest Territories, unprecedented economic growth, play a role in creating housing insecurity and homelessness (Christensen 2017; Dyck and Patterson 2017). More structural, systemic factors such as paternalistic colonial policies combined with often aggressive resource extractive practices have profoundly transformed life in many Arctic Indigenous communities and are frequently overlooked when assessing and analyzing housing insecurity (Christensen 2017: 4–5).

Housing insecurity in the Arctic is illustrative of the intersections of race and gender oppression and the ways in which inadequate housing conditions compound the vulnerability of Indigenous women and their children to violence and abuse. In most regions of the Arctic, research or statistics on violence against Indigenous women remains scant (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) 2019). In regions where studies exist, gendered violence is considerably higher than average (see Eriksen et al. 2015; Mcgrath 2014; Naalakkersuisut 2013; Pauktuutit 2006; Statistics Canada 2006). When seeking assistance, experiences of racism, sexism, and stigmatization are common. Further, some women are faced with abandonment “by their families and friends for a variety of reasons including leaving their home communities, being blamed for abuse and assault and for their lifestyles (i.e. being homeless and using substances)” (Schmidt et al. 2015: np). Without a gender analysis, the different factors and consequences of housing insecurity between men and women in Arctic Indigenous communities are made invisible.

### **Indigenous security and self-determination**

It has been suggested that Arctic Indigenous communities are more secure if they have greater self-determination. Drawing on research in Indigenous communities, Slowey argued that negotiating and settling land claims simultaneously with self-government agreements (rather than negotiating land claims alone) significantly contributes to the collective decision-making authority and the community’s ability to take control over political affairs. Specifically, in Arctic Indigenous communities with intensified extractive industry activities, self-government significantly strengthens the community’s ability to “address their human security issues” (Slowey 2014: 188). However, strong self-government alone will not be sufficient to alleviate safety concerns related to extractive industry development projects.

The negative impacts of development projects on Northern Indigenous communities, particularly on Indigenous women, have been addressed by a number of authors who discussed the physical violence and exploitation that already has been or could potentially be perpetrated on Indigenous women (Cox and Mills 2015; Hall 2013; Koutouki and Lofts 2018; Little 2007; Nightingale et al. 2017; Sweet 2014a, 2014b). Risk factors that increase the likelihood of violence include the large numbers of transient male workers entering an

area, the inability of rural communities (most Arctic development projects will likely be located in rural areas) to absorb and address infrastructure needs (including policing to keep community members safe), and the history of prejudice and violence against Indigenous communities (Sweet 2014a). Even a community with strong self-government will require new funding and proactive community and organizational actions in order to effectively respond to the first two identified factors, and there are no quick solutions to systemic and societal biases.

What is more, existing self-governing institutions in the Arctic have largely failed to address the prevalent problem of violence against Indigenous women and children. According to research, there is a general consensus among Indigenous women in Canada, Scandinavia, and Greenland that the interpersonal dimension of gender violence must be an inextricable part of the process and implementation of Indigenous self-determination. Gender violence is a relation and structure of domination that prevents not only Indigenous women from participating in advancing the collective self-determination of their communities, nations, and societies, but ultimately prevents Indigenous communities, nations, and societies from achieving self-determination (Kuokkanen 2019).

In order for Indigenous self-government to truly advance the human security of Indigenous peoples in the Arctic it needs to pay attention to gendered violence. It is not possible to discuss security in Indigenous communities without addressing interpersonal physical and sexual violence, both of which are fundamentally gendered. Self-government may increase decision-making authority and jurisdiction, but in and of itself it does not advance human security in Indigenous communities. Gender violence negatively impacts entire communities, not just women and girls, often creating cycles of violence and intergenerational trauma, as well as causing the breakdown of family and kinship relations, including the removal of children to the child-welfare system. This impacts community cohesion and the community's ability to control its collective affairs. The Indigenous human security discourse needs to pay specific attention to the silencing and exclusion of gendered forms of violence at a number of levels, including research, self-government institutions, and at the grassroots level in Indigenous communities.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter established the core elements of Indigenous security as food, shelter, and personal/community safety. It demonstrated that these elements are intertwined with and informed by complex environmental, political, social, and cultural concerns. We argued that in addition to acknowledging the complexity of these elements, a comprehensive conception of Indigenous security in the Arctic and future Indigenous security research must comprise an intersectional analysis that simultaneously accounts for Indigeneity and gender. As our examination has shown, without an intersectional approach both the analysis and subsequent solutions remain inadequate. Conceptualizing Indigenous security in gender-neutral terms obfuscates the dynamics and power relations involved in the security discourse, resulting in analyses and policies that are partial at best, or misguided at worst. What need to be addressed are gender-specific social and economic factors and institutionalized structures of domination and control.

Existing scholarship on Arctic Indigenous security is limited and tends to homogenize Indigenous communities in non-gendered terms. There is little recognition that the approach that works with one group may not be appropriate for a different group. Examining the core elements of Indigenous security without a gender analysis obfuscates critical aspects such as



how intimate-partner violence contributes to housing insecurity of many Indigenous women. In turn, housing insecurity frequently increases food insecurity, with far-reaching consequences for women with children.

Moreover, an intersectional analysis incorporates an examination of the structural inequalities of Arctic Indigenous security. It considers the relations of domination ranging from the intimate micro-level to the macro-levels of state and global geopolitics with a specific Indigenous gendered analytic. It recognizes not only that elitist militaristic security discourses are a central part of the relations of domination and a form of structural violence, but also that state-centered conceptions of security are irrelevant and inappropriate for Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous intersectional security theory interrogates how the structural violence of state and state institutions, including patriarchal and patronizing colonial policies, and more recent neoliberal economic development agendas, have wreaked havoc with the social, political, and cultural security of Arctic Indigenous communities. The intersection of all these aspects requires more detailed empirical research and theoretical considerations in order to set an agenda for future Indigenous security research and policymaking in the Arctic and beyond.

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### Notes

- 1 For a discussion on strengths and weaknesses of the concept of human security, see the special issue of *Security Dialogue* 2004 35(3): 347–387.
- 2 For example, only seven of the 53 communities in Nunavut have shelters (Mcgrath 2014). In Greenland, there are fewer than 10 crisis centers in the entire country for victims of domestic violence (Enoksen 2005).

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