Tardy Explorers: Academics and the "Problem" of Canadian Arctic Sovereignty

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In this paper, I seek to determine what inspires concern about Canada's legal Arctic sovereignty among Canadian academics. I address whether objectively induced concerns about clear sovereignty issues inspire academics. I also address whether the Arctic's place in Canadian culture inspires academics in any way. I argue that none of the legal sovereignty issues or even concern about climate change completely inspires concerns about Arctic sovereignty. Rather, concerns for Inuit livelihood fostered during visits to the region inspire academics.

In the first section of this paper, I discuss background about Arctic sovereignty and review existing literature on the subject to show that there is little consensus among academics about the nature of the major sovereignty issues. The emphasis on legal sovereignty issues is an example of securitization, as per critical security theory. Some scholars argue that the influence of the Arctic on Canadian culture inspires concern for the region, though I do not find this explanation convincing. The first section casts doubt on the notion that objective concern about clear issues inspires academics to write about Canada's legal sovereignty.

In the second section of this paper, I demonstrate that neither an objective concern about Arctic sovereignty nor cultural concerns drive academic work on Arctic sovereignty. Toward this end, I interviewed 17 of Canada's top academics on the Arctic, five graduate students as well as a former high-ranking official with the Government of Canada. I interviewed nearly all of the top academics on Canada's legal sovereignty. I refer to these writers as "security writers" because they articulate security threats stemming from Canada's potential lack of Arctic sovereignty. I also interviewed scholars who write about Arctic issues, but not sovereignty, in order to identify whether there are any unique factors that drive sovereignty concerns among some academics but not others. I refer to these writers as "non-security writers" because they do not write about security concerns in Canada's Arctic. I chose to study academics because they are the key securitizing actor on the issue.

In the third section, I demonstrate that concerns for Inuit livelihood and engagement with the region drive academic work on Arctic sovereignty by analyzing the results of my interviews in the context of the work of geographer Cole Harris. In the conclusion, I discuss the importance of these findings. This research is important because I address literature that questions the objectivity of some academics who write about Arctic sovereignty. I also provide insight into underlying issues to do with Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

Before proceeding, four definitions are in order. First, where is the "Arctic?" Some people uphold a strict distinction between "the North" and "the Arctic," while others use the terms interchangeably. Since the scholars in question do not provide a consistent definition of the Arctic, I resist the urge to do so. In interviews, my definition of "the Arctic" is the definition used by my interviewee. Second, an academic in this paper is someone with a high level of education who publishes in scholarly publications consistently. Third, securitization refers to the process of defining an issue as "security." The critical security perspective upholds that the object of security and even threats are socially constructed. A security issue is a situation in which an actor argues that regular rules need not apply to respond to a threat (Buzan et. al., 1998: 21). Thus, defining something as a security issue can be an effective way to push a problem to the top of the agenda. Fourth, Arctic sovereignty in this paper specifically refers to challenges to Canada's legal control over the Arctic.

Section One: The Uncertain Nature of Arctic Sovereignty

Canada faces at least four challenges to its legal sovereignty in the Arctic. First, Canada is determining the delineation and delimitation of the outer continental shelf, which may extend Canada's maritime boundaries. Canada's claim may overlap with Russia and the United States' claims (Byers, 2009: 96-97). Second, states do not agree on the legal status of the Northwest Passage. The United States and other countries argue that it is international waters, while Canada and Russia maintain it is Canadian internal waters. Third, Canada faces an unresolved border dispute with the United States in the Beaufort Sea. Fourth, Canada and Denmark both claim ownership of Hans Island. Compounded with these issues, Canada's Arctic is undergoing climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the Arctic is warming at twice the rate as the rest of the world (IPCC, 2007: 656). In addition, in 2008, the United States Geological Survey estimated that the Arctic region contains 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil. It is clear that there are issues in the Arctic

Yet, it is doubtful that clear threats to Canada's legal Arctic sovereignty totally motivate academic work. Many writers agree that the Arctic is under threat, but disagree about the nature of the threat. Political scientist Michael Byers (2009: 60-61) argues that Canada must control the Northwest Passage as internal waters because terrorists and illegal immigrants want to use the passage to enter North America and threaten Canadian national security. Researchers Whitney Lackenbauer, Ken Coates, Greg Poelzer and Bill Morrison, the authors of *Arctic Front*, somewhat agree with Byers' concerns (2008: 149). Political scientist Rob Huebert contends that "smugglers" could use the Arctic to bring illegal products into North America (2009: 27). All of the aforementioned authors, along with political scientist Andrea Charron (2005b: 1), agree that substandard ships, which seek to use the Northwest Passage for transport, threaten Arctic environmental security. However, Franklyn Griffiths doubts that the passage will become an important shipping route (2004: 10-11). Scholars do not agree about the threat to Arctic sovereignty.

It is further doubtful that clear threats to Canada's Arctic sovereignty motivate academic work because scholars do not agree about the nature of the threat to the Arctic. Huebert disagrees with the above authors because he believes that foreign countries may pose a threat to Arctic security (2009: 27). Researchers Shelagh Grant (2010: 400) and Barry Zellen (2010: 58) share Huebert's concern. The authors of *Arctic Front* agree that the Northwest Passage is the only true security challenges in the Arctic (2008: 148). Huebert strongly believes that all four challenges threaten Canadian security (2009). Some scholarship by international authors expresses concern that there could be conflict between states in the Arctic (for example, see Gunitskiy, 2008: 269). Authors do not agree about whether other states pose a threat to Canada's Arctic.

Many disagreements in the literature on Arctic sovereignty are questions of emphasis. Writers such as Huebert and Byers emphasize the impact that Arctic sovereignty disputes will have on Southern Canada. Writers such as Lackenbauer emphasize the impact of sovereignty issues on Northern Canada (2009: 9). Writers such as Donald McRae (2007) emphasize the impact that a changing Arctic could have on Canada's international reputation if Canada does not take action to improve the security of the Arctic. Some authors, such as Elizabeth Riddell Dixon

(2008: 344) argue that the media is far too alarmist about security issues in the Arctic, namely to do with the delineation and delimitation of the outer continental shelf. Some Inuit writing argues that such an emphasis distracts from the real social issues the Inuit face (Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2008). Different authors emphasize different objects of security and threats to security in the Arctic.

Thus, why do Canadian scholars believe that Arctic sovereignty is threatened? There is sufficient debate about the nature of the four main Arctic sovereignty issues to rule out that clear objective issues motivate concern. If there were a clear, objective threat to the Arctic, most scholars would agree on the threat. Scholars agree there is a threat to Arctic sovereignty, but they totally disagree about what the threat is. Some speculate that the Arctic's place in Canadian culture influences Arctic sovereignty concern. Charron argues that the Northwest Passage's importance in the formation of Canadian "identity and greatness" drives Canada's quest to control the region (2005a: 147). In contrast, Lackenbauer and the other authors of the book *Arctic Front* argue that Canadians do not care about Arctic issues outside of a few unique periods of interest (2008: 7). In the next section, I seek to discover whether the cultural explanation is an adequate explanation for concern about Arctic sovereignty or if there is a better explanation.

Section Two: Why the Arctic Matters To Some

Interview Method

As previously mentioned, to determine the inspiration for academic concern for Arctic sovereignty, I conducted interviews. One important question that I must elaborate on is why I choose to focus on academics. I focus on academics because they are the most important securitizing actor in the Arctic sovereignty debate. According to my calculations, major newspapers quote academics in almost 30 per cent of all articles about Arctic sovereignty. I asked the former high-ranking government official if academics influenced his views. He said they did, and that academics had been "very effective" in driving the Arctic sovereignty issue while he was in power. He specifically mentioned Rob Huebert as one academic who had indirectly shaped political positions on the Arctic while he was in power. Academics seem to have influence and thus are worthy of study.

In total, I interviewed 17 academics who study Arctic issues. Among them, 10 have written about Arctic sovereignty issues extensively. The remaining seven write about Arctic issues extensively, but not Arctic sovereignty issues. Among them, 10 were political science professors, two were history professors, two were geographers and three were law professors. In addition, as these subjects tended to be from an older age demographic (35 to 75 years old), I felt it was appropriate to interview five younger graduate students who, while not yet academics, plan on becoming academics in the future. All were political science students (unintentionally). I also interviewed three academics who studied Canadian security but not Arctic sovereignty. I also interviewed a former high-ranking official with the government of Canada. I recruited all except the graduate students based on their reputation. I selected the graduate students by a call put out to students who attended the 2009 Arctic and the Circumpolar World conference. I interviewed participants by phone. Interviews ranged in length from 10 minutes to 90 minutes, although the average was 45 minutes. I recorded and transcribed all interviews except in one

case. The majority of participants allowed me to attribute quotes to them if they got the opportunity to edit them beforehand to correct what they believed were points in need of clarification. The interviews were semi-structured in that I had a list of questions and asked follow-up questions and clarifications. I spoke to almost all of the major experts who write about the Arctic actively. Among Arctic experts, none is from the Arctic. One graduate student I interviewed was from the Arctic.

I sought to discover the answers to five sets of questions in my interviews. First, do people who study Canadian Arctic sovereignty, and argue that it is an important issue, cite it as the most pressing issue that the region faces today? If the answer is yes, it may follow that those who study the Arctic but do not study Arctic sovereignty (non-security writers) do not cite Arctic sovereignty as the most pressing issue the region faces today. The purpose of the first question is to establish whether Arctic security writers study sovereignty because they believe it is important and whether non-security writers do not study sovereignty because they believe that it is not important. The first set of questions helps establish whether Arctic security writers choose to study sovereignty based on some objective concerns about Arctic security.

The second set of questions determined whether people choose to research the Arctic because they have a pre-existing personal attachment to the Arctic. I asked five questions during my interviews geared to answer my second overall research topic, namely about how they came to research the region. The work of historian Sherill Grace inspired my second question. She shows that the Arctic plays a prominent role in Canadian works of culture, from works by author Margaret Atwood to author Farley Mowat and pianist Glenn Gould (2002: 4). The purpose of the second set of question was to determine whether people who studied the Arctic read works by authors such as Mowat. If they are interested in Arctic culture, it could indicate that they are concerned about Arctic sovereignty because it forms a part of their idea of Canadian culture.

Stemming from my second question, my third set of questions concerned whether people who study the Arctic have a pre-existing interest in European-tradition Arctic popular culture. By European-tradition popular culture, I refer to popular culture such as books, movies, art, and so on that people of European descent created. It usually ignores people who live in the Arctic in favour of depictions of landscape and the exploits of European explorers (Grace, 2002: 4). I asked respondents what Arctic popular culture had inspired their work and their emotions about the Arctic. The purpose of the third set of questions was to determine whether an interest in European Arctic popular culture inspires academics to study Arctic sovereignty.

The fourth set of questions were to determine what affect the number of trips one made to the Arctic had on views about Arctic sovereignty. Sherill Grace notes that engagement with the Arctic is very important to having a cultural connection with the Arctic as many cultural works about the Arctic recount first-time visits to the region by outsiders (2002: 7). I asked respondents in an online follow-up survey to indicate in a range how many times they have visited the region. The purpose of the fourth set of questions was to determine whether engagement with the region inspired people to study Arctic sovereignty, which could suggest that neither an objective view of Arctic security, nor necessarily Canadian culture inspires academics.

In the fifth set of questions, I sought to determine whether people who believe that Arctic sovereignty is an important issue are more likely to believe that the Arctic is culturally important for Canada. The purpose of the fifth set of questions was to determine whether fears about

protecting Canadian culture truly motivated academics who write about Arctic sovereignty. I asked interviewees about the importance of the Arctic in terms of both their own personal idea of Canadian identity or culture and Canadian culture for the majority of Canadians. I then had respondents complete a follow-up survey. I asked them to rate the importance of the issue of Arctic sovereignty out of 10 and the importance of the Arctic to Canadian culture out of 10.

Results

First, do people who study Canadian Arctic sovereignty, and argue that it is an important issue, cite it as the most pressing issue that the region faces today? Of the 10 security writers that I interviewed, eight indicated that Arctic sovereignty was an important issue to some extent. One person indicated it was not important in any sense. International lawyer Donald McRae was reluctant to state that Arctic sovereignty was an issue when he said:

> We (Canadians) don't have anyone challenging our sovereignty in the North legally. There's a belief that there is, but no one is challenging it legally. We have a difference of view with the United States over the legal status of the Northwest Passage, but that's not really in legal terms a sovereignty issue. In many ways, popular sovereignty discussion doesn't really make a lot of sense from an international lawyer's point of view.

The remaining eight security writers argued that Arctic sovereignty was an important issue in some sense but were careful to establish that people misunderstood the issue in some important sense. For example, Whitney Lackenbauer and Franklyn Griffiths took this position:

> "It's important to remember that many of the sovereignty disputes that are out there are extremely well managed. The positions that we've been taking over the last few decades have been well developed. There's a reason we've maintained a consistent line from a foreign affairs standpoint for the last 50 years." (Lackenbauer)

> "I think sovereignty is an overrated issue and we should move beyond it to an emphasis on Arctic stewardship." (Griffiths)

Nearly all of the security writers argued that other issues were important in the region, perhaps even more important than sovereignty. For example, Greg Poelzer, despite his important work on sovereignty issues, did not initially mention sovereignty as an issue faced by the region:

> The known North and the forgotten North, as it were, is where much of the resource wealth of this country comes from, and yet much of the infrastructure, telecommunications, transportation, health and social infrastructure locally is underdeveloped, especially compared to Alaska, Scandinavia, and even in certain respects Russia. If we were able to do that, I think it would be foundational to the further development of the natural resources in the North in a way I think makes sense for Northern communities as well as for Canada as a whole.

Security writers cited local underdevelopment, climate change, aboriginal self-governance development, environmental issues and responsible resource development as issues more pressing than sovereignty.

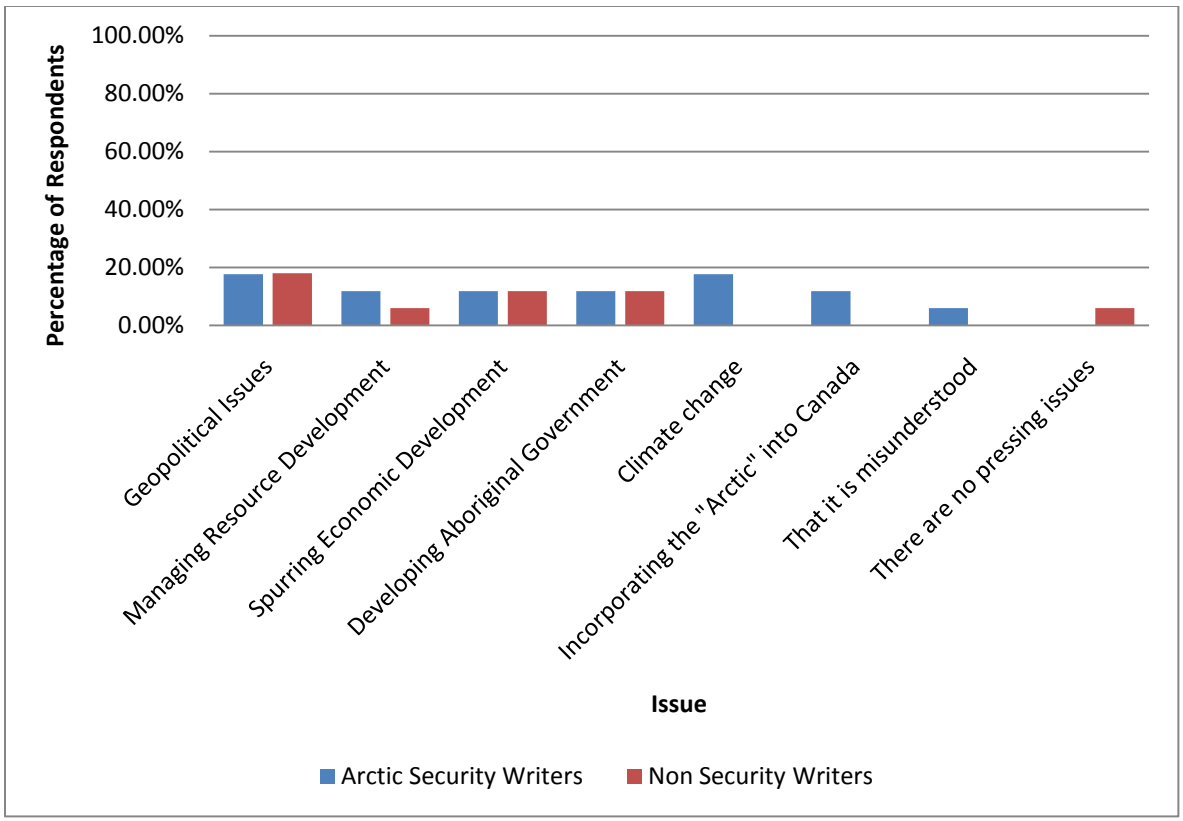
Non-security writers also stated frequently that Arctic sovereignty is a pressing issue for Canada. Some, such as political scientists Gary Wilson, Graham White and Mark Dickerson

mentioned the issue more directly than did many security writers. For example, White said, "There are other powers who, if given half a chance, would try to muscle in on our (Canada's) Arctic." One possibility was that many non-security writers were aware of Arctic sovereignty issues and chose not to write about such issues because they did not believe the issues were important. This possibility was not always the case. Several non-security writers held similar views to security writers. Arctic security-writers' research seems to inform the views of non-security writers. For example, Graham White indicated that he had received encouragement to research sovereignty issues but ultimately will not do so. When I asked him if he planned to research sovereignty issues in the future, White said:

> No, not really. If you had any idea of the pile of notes and uncompleted manuscripts I have on domestic stuff, and incomplete SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) grants and stuff, you'd understand. It's not that I'm not interested or have an antipathy; I'm just way too busy.

As displayed in figure one, both security writers and non-security writers cited a wide variety of issues as the most pressing Arctic issue and tended to agree on the nature of those challenges. These results are significant because it largely disproves the notion that a clear threat to Canada's legal Arctic sovereignty motivates academic concern. If there were clear, pressing legal Arctic sovereignty issues in the Arctic, more security writers would say they were important.

Figure 1: Pressing Arctic Issues Today



Second, do people choose to research the Arctic because they have a pre-existing personal attachment to the Arctic? Only a few interviewees said that they had an interest in the Arctic before they studied it, all of whom were security writers. Greg Poelzer and Shelagh Grant both indicated that their interest in the Arctic was inspired in small part by an interest in the outdoors. Whitney Lackenbauer was the only interviewee who said that when he was growing up he had a strong interest in Arctic history and mythology. Gale Osherenko was the only interviewee who had been to the region for anything other than work prior to studying the Arctic. She said that this trip was formative in her decision to study the region. Geographer Robert Bone was the only interviewee who said he was partly drawn to the Arctic because it was still unexplored to some extent when he began his career in the 1960s. He said, "This is the last major geographic challenge, and of course geographers tend to be attracted to that situation where you have a large area about to be undergoing either settlement, development, whatever."

The majority of those interviewed cited reasons other than pre-existing interest for choosing to study the Arctic. Many were studying a larger theoretical issue, such as the implications of the Law of the Sea Treaty. For example, Rob Huebert said his doctoral dissertation research first exposed him to Arctic issues:

> It just happened that when I was looking for a dissertation topic, it was in about 1986, and the Voyage of the Polar Sea had just happened. And so, you had Law of the Sea, you had maritime dimension, it had Canada-U.S., it had Canadian interest. It just seemed like an obvious case study.

Others, such as Gary Wilson indicated that encouragement from their university department motivated them to research Arctic issues:

> Part of my dissertation was on a region in Northern Russia and then from there I gradually expanded my focus to include politics in the circumpolar north. I drew on expertise at my university and benefitted from the strong connections with Arctic politics and Arctic teaching at UNBC (University of Northern British Columbia).

Many said that a job opportunity inspired them to study the Arctic. Both geographer Derek Armitage and Greg Poelzer said that their employment experience got them interested in Arctic issues. Greg Poelzer said,

> "There was an opportunity to teach in Northern Alberta in an Aboriginal social-work program. They needed a political science elective and I had a young family at the time. We needed the dollars. I went up North and taught there once a week. It was through that experience I got very interested in Aboriginal governance issues and Northern issues." (Poelzer)

The media first inspired writers who have been researching Arctic issues for a relatively short period (less than 10 years), such as Andrea Charron, Suzanne Lalonde and Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon. For example, Riddell-Dixon said:

> About five years ago, I started to read newspaper articles that were confusing Northwest Passage issues with the Continental Shelf Extension issue. They were making it look like World War Three up there. I thought, 'This just doesn't accord with my understanding of the Law of the Sea.' That's what prompted me to begin writing about the Arctic.

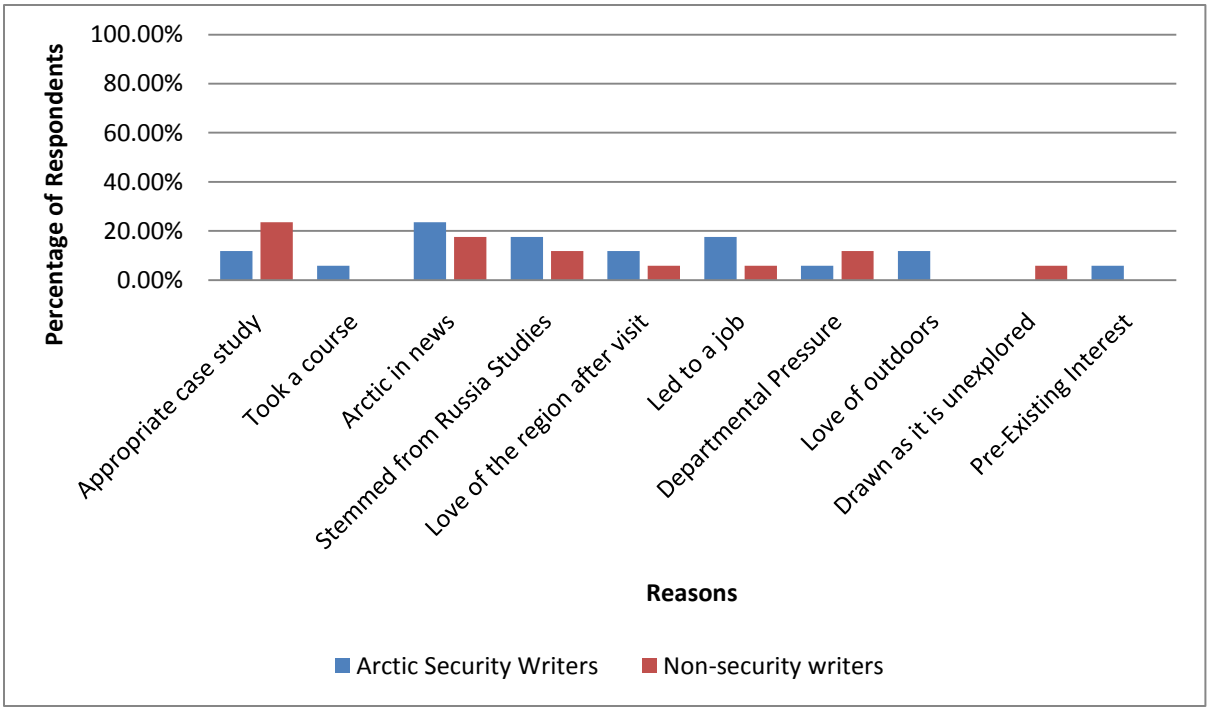
Another prominent reason researchers were inspired to research the Arctic was that they had become interested after a visit to the region. Greg Poelzer and Graham White are examples of researchers who said that once they visited the region, they "fell in love" with it and needed to understand it:

> "It's working with the communities, quite frankly. I was working with Métis communities in Northern Alberta through my teaching. So I guess teaching was huge. That was a major driver, the major impetus." (Poelzer)

> "I realized that not many people, very few people in fact, were doing Northern politics and that the issues intellectually were very stimulating. I realized that I enjoyed it and that people were giving me quite good access to information. It also gave me an excuse to hang out in the North, which I couldn't afford to do otherwise." (White)

As seen in figure two, a variety of reasons initially drew Arctic researchers to the region. A pre-existing interest in the region based on cultural works was not a common response. Additionally, it is not possible to generalize about differences between security writers and non-security writers. It also is important to note some of those surveyed also indicated that previous research experience with Russian Arctic issues partly inspired their interest in Canadian Arctic issues. Note that the total responses in figure two add up to greater than the total of academic interview subjects because many gave more than one reason for how they came to study the region. These results are significant because they cast doubt on the notion that Arctic culture motivated academic concern about Arctic sovereignty. If culture were important, more academics would indicate a strong cultural connection to Canada's Arctic.

Figure 2: Why Do Researchers Study The Arctic?



Third, do people who study the Arctic have a pre-existing interest in European-tradition Arctic popular culture? Overall, I found that cultural works and depictions of the Arctic inspired few Arctic writers. As previously mentioned, Whitney Lackenbauer was the only researcher who indicated that he had a strong interest in Arctic popular culture before he began to research the region. Five people indicated they had some weak interest in Arctic popular culture before they studied the area. Three of these people were security writers. Four people said that they had no interest in Arctic popular culture before they began to study the region but developed a strong interest after they visited the region. Two of these people were security writers. Of these four respondents, three emphasized that Aboriginal popular culture inspired them, such as the Canadian Inuit film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Only one respondent, international lawyer Suzanne Lalonde, indicated that she developed an interest in European popular culture after visiting the Arctic:

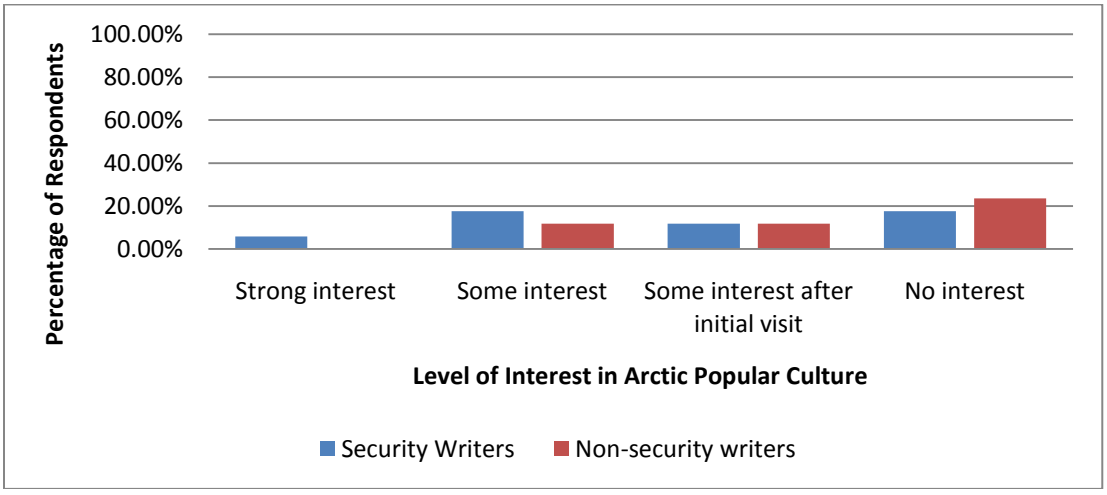
> When I first started with Michael (Byers) I read all about the Franklyn expeditions. I'm quite fascinated, like so many others. Especially after we'd done the Northwest Passage on the Amundsen, this huge powerful icebreaker, in the middle of nowhere in ice and cold. You think, 'How did those guys have the courage to come in wooden ships?' I was just fascinated. I read all these books on the first explorers.

Seven people said they continue to have no connection to Arctic popular culture. Of these, four were security writers, such as Rob Huebert:

> I'll be perfectly honest; I didn't really ever take the time to familiarize myself with some of the Farley Mowat or Pierre Berton literature on the Arctic. I hadn't been brought up on sort of reading stuff on the Arctic until I needed a case study. At that point, it's been so busy just trying to stay up with the academic literature, I haven't had time to go back to the popular stuff.

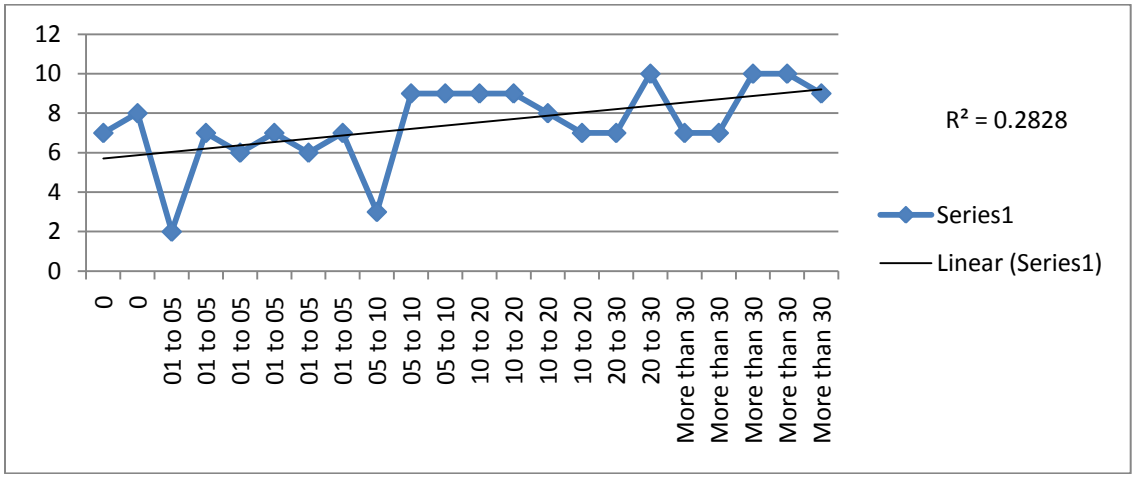
As seen in figure nine, no clear trends are present as to interest in Arctic popular culture between security writers and non-security writers. Once again, these results are significant because they disprove the notion that interest in Arctic culture motivates academic concern about Arctic sovereignty. If Arctic culture were important, more academics would cite an interest in it.

Figure 3: Interest in Arctic Popular Culture



Fourth, what affect does the number of trips one made to the Arctic have on views on Arctic sovereignty? As seen in figure 10, a moderate correlation is present between the number of trips one has made to the Arctic and how important an issue they rate Arctic sovereignty.

Figure 4: Engagement with the Arctic versus the Importance of Arctic sovereignty



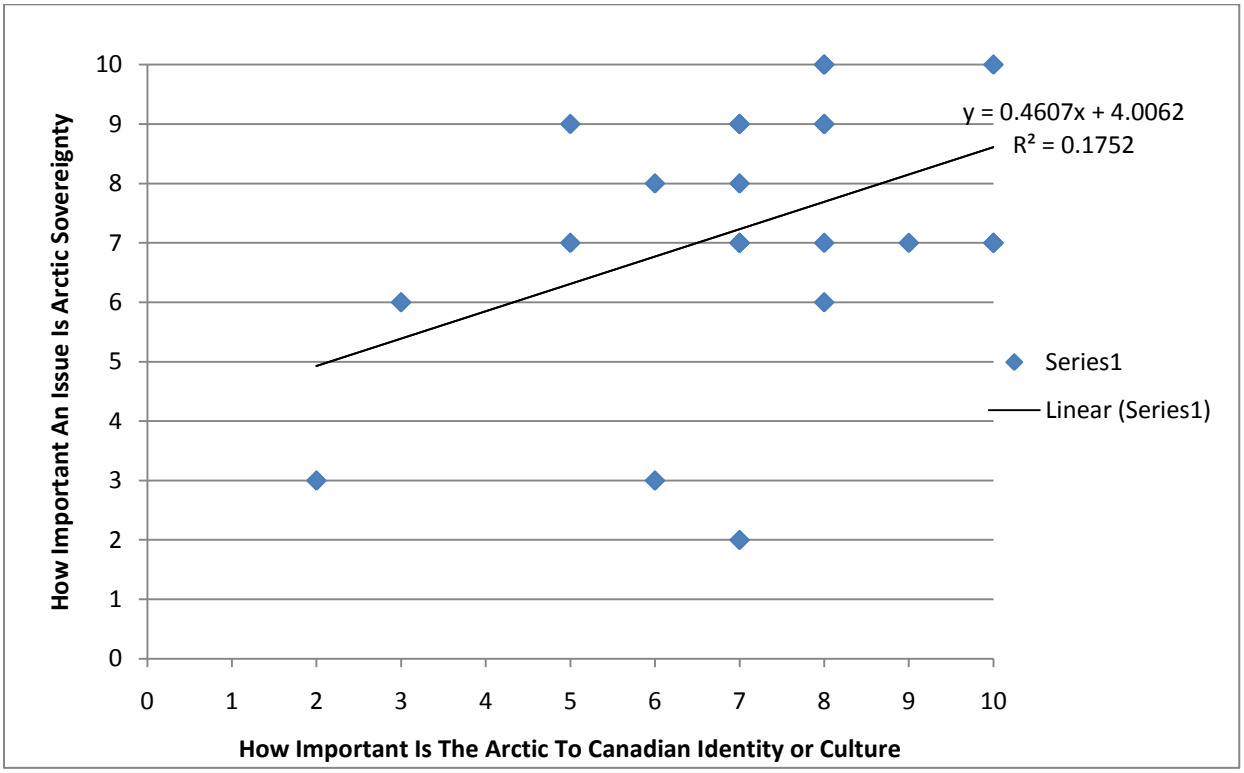
Everyone who has been to the region more than 10 times indicated Arctic sovereignty is an important issue, warranting at least a rating of seven out of 10. People who have been to the Arctic only a few times on average rated the issue slightly lower than did those who have been more times. The only people who rated the importance of Arctic sovereignty a 10 have visited the region more than 30 times. Those who have visited the region more than 30 times have probably written about the region for a long time. The two people who have not visited the region indicated Arctic sovereignty was an important issue in some sense. Clearly, the number of trips one has made to the Arctic is somewhat significant. These results are significant because they suggest a potential inspiration for concern about the Arctic.

There is a shortcoming to the correlation between the number of visits one has made to the Arctic and the importance of the issue of Arctic sovereignty. As I noted in my introduction, the interviewees did not have a consistent definition of the Arctic. As a result, someone who said they visited the Arctic five times and someone who said they visited the Arctic 20 times may have in fact visited the same places an equal number of times. However, I do not believe this is a crucial issue, which discredits the correlation, for two reasons. First, for my purposes, the actual definition of the Arctic does not matter. What matters is the perception that one has visited the Arctic. If a group of people generally argues it is crucial to defend the Arctic, they need not agree on where the Arctic is located. Second, the conditions and issues in the Arctic and the Subarctic are much the same. Numerous people who I interviewed said the issues that people face in both regions are similar, regardless of where people live. One Arctic academic who asked that I not quote him directly expressed his frustration that people write so much to distinguish the Arctic and the Subarctic when in his view there is not much to distinguish them beyond a few geographical features. I do not believe that some of the ambiguity as to the location of the Arctic severely effects the correlation between the number of trips one has made to the Arctic and the importance they place on the issue of Arctic sovereignty.

Fifth, I sought to determine whether people who believe that Arctic sovereignty is an important issue are more likely to believe that the Arctic is culturally important for Canada. In terms of the interviews, five out of the 17 Arctic academics I interviewed said the Arctic was not at all important to Canadian culture for most people, one of whom was a security writer. Three Arctic academics said it was very important to Canadian culture for most people, all of whom were security writers. Eight Arctic academics said the Arctic was growing in cultural importance for Canadians as Arctic issues grab headlines. One Arctic security writer said that they thought it was diminishing in importance for most Canadians. In terms of the importance of the Arctic for the Arctic academic's own personal Canadian culture or identity, 13 of 17 Arctic academics said it was personally important. Three of the four people who said it was not personally important were security writers. For example, Frances Abele said, "If what you're trying to get at is did the Arctic have some mystical place in my childhood or did I have a romantic feeling about it, no."

The results of the online survey are below in figure 11. The results are slightly statistically significant.

Figure 5: Sovereignty versus Culture Correlation



The coefficient of correlation is roughly $r^2 = 0.18$, which represents a weak correlation. Thus, people who believe that Arctic sovereignty is an important issue for Canada are more likely to believe that the Arctic is important to Canadian culture. However, the difference is slight. Nonetheless, this shows that cultural security provides part of, but not the entire explanation for concerns about Arctic sovereignty. Culture is a unconvincing explanation for academic concern about Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

Aside from my five sets of research questions, a number of other observations became evident over the course of the interviews. Everyone, except for one security writer, Greg Poelzer, emphasized how different the Arctic was from anything else previously experienced, in Canada or elsewhere. For example, Gary Wilson said of his first visit to the Arctic:

> It was certainly different. I didn't really have much experience travelling in regions that were sparsely populated, that were Northern in that sense, that were isolated. You really get a sense of isolation when you're travelling in the Arctic, and I've experienced this on a number of occasions. It's not so easy, if you need to get out, to just jump in a car and drive away.

When asked what his feelings were upon his first visit to the region, Franklyn Griffiths indicated he felt "a certain feeling that in that kind of environment we are all living a precarious existence dependent on lifelines of support." He went on to say, "In other words, you're aware of the vulnerability of human life." Some spoke about travelling to the Arctic almost as if it were travelling to another country. Derek Armitage compared his experience travelling north to his experience travelling to Asia:

> The feeling when I got up there was I had to be very cautious on how I did my work. It's a cross-cultural context, just like if you were going to work in Indonesia, or work in Vietnam. You need to be sensitive to cultural norms and practices that recognize the baggage you may come with when you go up to a small community in the Arctic.

Some emphasized how much they admired the people of the Arctic. Andrea Charron said, "What struck me was the pride of the Inuit. They're very staunch Canadians, very nationalistic, very proud of their heritage. They really are an incredible people." Many, such as Gary Wilson, Shelagh Grant, Suzanne Lalonde and Graham White said that they have come to admire and identify with the people in the region more as they have travelled in the region:

> "It's certainly a place that I've grown to love. I've become close to people living in the Arctic and connected to people living in the Arctic." (Wilson)

> "Growing fascination with Inuit history and how different their culture was from ours. How southern Canadians retained romantic notions of the Arctic, whereas the people living there were trying to earn a living, trying to survive and trying to adapt to a modern world." (Grant)

> "I think just so much respect and admiration for the people – their ability to survive up there and prosper." (Suzanne Lalonde)

> "I'm now passed the golly-gee stage, I hope. I realize that there are very serious problems. I guess overall I remain hopeful about the opportunities." (White)

Some indicated that upon their first visit to the region, the landscape stuck them, but upon further visits, that impression became less important. It is clear that the most lasting impression of the Arctic for nearly everyone that I spoke to was the people. Many emphasized that it was important to visit the region. As Shelagh Grant said, "It was probably the historian in me that said, 'You can't understand a place or its people unless you've been there'." Suzanne Lalonde indicated she had been encouraged to visit the region when she began researching it:

> Michael Byers and I had organized a little conference in Montreal. We were taking out Louis Fortier and some of our guests for dinner. Louis is scientific director of ArcticNet and has been working in the Arctic for decades. As a scientist, he can justify extended trips. I remember him telling Michael and I, 'You're launching this huge, big project...Have you ever been in the Arctic?' At that point, we said we'd been to Iqaluit. He said, 'That's it?' and thought it was ridiculous. It was Louis who said, 'Even as legal academics or political scientists, you've got to see and you've got to experience it.'

Some drew a distinction between visiting the Arctic and visiting the "true Arctic." Some indicated that it is impossible to understand the region unless you move beyond the major cities in the Arctic and visit smaller villages. Suzanne Lalonde illustrated this idea:

> I went to Iqaluit and one of the first things the Inuit we met that time were saying was, 'Thank you very much for coming up and talking to us, but you realize you're just in a big city in the south. This is not the real Arctic.' I remember at the time it made us laugh, like 'Iqaluit a big city?' But I do understand what they mean now that I've been around more in some of the smaller communities.

For all but perhaps one of the people I spoke to, an Arctic visit left a lasting impression. These results are significant because they suggest a potential important factor that influences academics to study the Arctic.

I also spoke to graduate students who are currently studying Arctic issues. I believed it was important to speak to younger people because most of the Arctic experts that I spoke to tended to be from an older demographic. It was possible that generational attitudes toward the Arctic generally influenced cultural attitudes toward the region regardless of how many visits one has made. All four graduate students who were not from the Arctic expressed similar attitudes toward Arctic sovereignty issues as academics. The graduate student from the Arctic differed, as he was sceptical that academic and other voices from the south could truly understand northern issues. It is clear that academics influence their attitudes toward the Arctic.

I also spoke to three writers who did not study Arctic sovereignty but studied other aspects of Canadian security. I chose to speak to them because I wondered whether to some extent their views on Arctic sovereignty would be different from Arctic security writers. I wanted to examine the views of people who were familiar with Canada's defence priorities but did not study sovereignty. Many of their responses were similar to those expressed by Arctic security writers. It was once again clear that Arctic security writers influenced their views on Arctic sovereignty because the frequently referenced specific views of Arctic sovereignty writers. They sometimes informally comment on it from time to time. All of them had encountered Arctic sovereignty at some point over the course of their teaching career.

In summary, it is clear that neither Canadian culture nor clear threats to Canadian Arctic sovereignty motivate academic concern. First, I wondered whether those who study the Arctic have a pre-existing cultural connection to the Arctic. For the most part, the answer is no. Three out of the 10 Arctic security writers I spoke to said that they had a pre-existing interest in the Arctic before studying the region. None of the non-security writers said they had a pre-existing interest. Exactly 40 per cent of security writers said they had some interest in Arctic popular culture before they studied the region. Only 29 per cent of non-security writers said the same

thing. Only one of the 17 people I interviewed had a strong interest in Arctic popular culture before visiting the region. Second, I wondered whether fears about Arctic sovereignty related to the amount of engagement with the region. I asked respondents how important the issue of Arctic sovereignty was on a scale of one to 10 and correlated that with how many times they had visited the Arctic. The average response of someone who had been to the region less than 10 times was 7.3 out of 10. The average response from someone who had been to the Arctic more than 10 times was 7.63 out of 10. Third, I wondered if a correlation is present between the importance of the Arctic to the respondent's idea of Canadian culture and the importance they place on Arctic sovereignty issues. There is a weak correlation between the two calculations. This indicates that there may be something to the notion that cultural connection with the Arctic motivates fears for Canadian sovereignty, yet that idea is far from the entire picture. Nearly everyone I spoke to chose to emphasize what an impact Inuit and Arctic residents had on them during their trips to the region. Their lasting impression was not the landscape, as Sherill Grace might predict, but rather the people of the region. Nearly everyone I spoke to chose to emphasize the fact that visiting the region was formative and essential to quality Arctic research.

Section Three: Alternate Explanations

For an explanation of these results, I turn to the work of geographer Cole Harris. According to Harris, the experience of Arctic researchers encountering a land that they are not accustomed to is common for Canadians visiting all of the country's regions. According to Harris' perspective, it is best to conceive of Canada as a series of islands in that different groups of people founded the regions in Canada at different times for different purposes (1987: 459-61). I believe that one can apply much of Harris' argument to the results of my interviews. Many of those I interviewed explained having a similar experience visiting the Arctic to visiting a foreign country. In the Arctic, they find communities that face challenges of development that they are not accustomed to in Canada. The people in the Arctic do not live in a way they think people should live in Canada. That is why so much of Arctic sovereignty is about building the North. Interviewees barely mentioned the four sovereignty disputes that formed the basis of my research. Most chose to focus on the challenges faced by people in the region. Tellingly, several Arctic researchers used colonial language to describe the Arctic. They referred to the region as "post colonial." Sovereignty in the Arctic has more to do with building Arctic communities than protecting the Arctic from any sort of a threat, perceived or otherwise.

To illustrate my argument further, I draw from off-the-record comments from interviewees. When speaking of the Inuit and Arctic residents, many of the people I spoke to at some point casually used the phrase "I was surprised by . . ." to make a point about how the Inuit live. For example, one might have said that they were surprised by how nice the Inuit were or how hard working. To read that statement implies an assumption beforehand that the Inuit would not have been nice or hard working. They were no doubt aware of a plethora of statistics that make the Arctic sound like a bad place in which to live, such as high rates of suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism and unemployment. Arctic researchers did not find a downtrodden people upon their visits to the Arctic, but rather vibrant communities striving for a better way of life in a country that does not fully understand them. Arctic researchers to some extent want to help Inuit peoples find that better way of life. These goals motivate academics who write about Arctic sovereignty issues.

Of course, the question is thus, why do researchers securitize the Arctic. Why do they talk about security threats to Canada if Arctic issues have little to do with actual security issues for Canada? The former government of Canada official told me in our interview that he tried to create alarmism around Arctic issues in order to place them onto the crowded national agenda. He said the Arctic sovereignty debate has to be alarmist because it is the only way the region will receive investment. For security writers, securitizing Arctic sovereignty could be a means to spur government investment in the region that ultimately will help the people in the region. Certainly, academics can justify the need for a new icebreaker for the region because it will help defend Canada's borders from illegal criminals. On the other hand, icebreakers can do many things other than defend against security threats for Canada. They help scientifically study the Arctic and transport supplies to Arctic residents. Securitization of the Arctic region could be a means for academics to help the people in the region.

Conclusions

I sought to determine why people choose to study Arctic sovereignty and why they believe it is threatened. Ultimately, I determined that those who study Arctic sovereignty and other Arctic issues have relatively little pre-existing interest in the Arctic. Based on interviews with 17 of Canada's top Arctic experts, five graduate students, three other academics and one former government of Canada, it is clear to me that cultural connection to the Arctic influences people to care more strongly about Arctic sovereignty to some small extent. However, it is far from the full explanation. Most people that I interviewed emphasized that trips to the Arctic inspired them to study the region. They emphasized that on those trips they felt a connection with the people in the Arctic and not the landscape of the region. Some said that they were "surprised" by the Inuit people in some way. Perhaps they learn that the statistics they have read about the region's high levels of alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide do not do justice to the spirit of the people in the region. Arctic sovereignty is at heart about providing a better standard of living for them.

These conclusions are important for three reasons. First, the conclusions shed some light on the issue of Arctic sovereignty. The motivations of those who write about the Arctic region as based on concerns about the people do not totally match the rhetoric surrounding the Arctic. The issues that many of my interviewees expressed as the pressing issues in the region, focussed around the people, were not necessarily issues on which they write. Security writers exaggerate the severity of threats to Arctic sovereignty for a political purpose. Second, these conclusions suggest that the current rhetoric on Arctic sovereignty may not be appropriate to improve the living conditions of people in Northern Canada. It is possible that alarmist rhetoric about security will lead to misplaced investments in military security. Third, it strikes me that the problems the Inuit in the region face is a compelling a story that should enthral policy makers who have the authority to affect change in the region. It says a lot about Canadian society that Arctic academics have found that this is not the case.

Appendix - Interview Subjects

The following is a list of all of the security and non-security writers who I spoke to for my research. Interviews were conducted over ten weeks between March 30, 2010 and June 15, 2010.

Security Writers:

- Andrea Charron (Political Science, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario)
- Shelagh Grant (History, Trent University, Toronto, Ontario)
- Franklyn Griffiths (Political Science, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario)
- Rob Huebert (Political Science, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta)
- Whitney Lackenbauer (University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario
- Suzanne Lalonde (Law, University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec)
- Donald McRae (Law, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario)
- Gale Osherenko (Law, University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California)
- Greg Poelzer (Political Science, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)
- Elizabeth Riddell Dixon (Political Science, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario)

Non-security Writers:

- Frances Abele (Public Policy, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario)
- Derek Armitage (Geography, Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario)
- Robert Bone (Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)
- Mark Dickerson (Geography, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta)
- Graham White (Political Science, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario)
- Gary Wilson (Political Science, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia)
- John Young (Political Science, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia)

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