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Arctic indigenous youth resilience and vulnerability: Comparative analysis of adolescent experiences across five circumpolar communities

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Abstract

Arctic peoples today find themselves on the front line of rapid environmental change brought about by globalizing forces, shifting climates, and destabilizing physical conditions. The weather is not the only thing undergoing rapid change here. Social climates are intrinsically connected to physical climates, and changes within each have profound effects on the daily life, health, and well-being of circumpolar indigenous peoples. This paper describes a collaborative effort between university researchers and community members from five indigenous communities in the circumpolar north aimed at comparing the experiences of indigenous Arctic youth in order to come up with a shared model of indigenous youth resilience. The discussion introduces a sliding scale model that emerged from the comparative data analysis. It illustrates how a “sliding scale” of resilience captures the inherent dynamism of youth strategies for “doing well” and what forces represent positive and negative influences that slide towards either

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personal and communal resilience or vulnerability. The model of the sliding scale is designed to reflect the contingency and interdependence of resilience and vulnerability and their fluctuations between lowest and highest points based on timing, local situation, larger context, and meaning.

Keywords

Arctic, indigenous, resilience, vulnerability, youth

Based on data from the Circumpolar Indigenous Pathways to Adulthood (CIPA; Allen et al., 2014; this issue) study this paper aims to provide a comparative framework and shared model for understanding indigenous youth resilience across five indigenous Arctic communities. We attempt to accomplish both tasks by providing a comparative review of cross-site findings and by introducing a sliding-scale model that is meant to capture the fluid and dynamic nature of youth resilience. The “sliding scale” of youth resilience will point at the inherent dynamism of youth strategies for “doing well” and illustrate positive and negative influences that may “tip” a person or community towards either resilience or vulnerability. The discussion will show how the model of the sliding scale reflects the contingent, interdependent, and interactive aspects of youth resilience and vulnerability.

The CIPA study brings together researchers and community members representing four national regions of the Arctic and five northern community and cultural contexts. The four regions are Alaska, Canada, Norway, and Russia. The five communities are Alaskan Yup'ik, Alaskan Inupiaq, Canadian Inuit, Norwegian Sámi, and Siberian Eveny. Each project examined the unique contexts and challenges of different Arctic indigenous communities and highlights issues related to contemporary sources of vulnerability and resilience for youth growing up and coming of age today.

The five participating indigenous communities involved in the project represent culturally, socially, politically, and economically diverse settings. Among them, the Canadian Inuit and the Sámi are recognized as the largest and most prominent groups who, over the last few decades, have gained the opportunity to exercise and maintain their own power structures within territorial autonomies and interact with national governments through local administrative bodies such as the Sámi parliament and Nunavut government (Plaut, 2012). The political involvement of Alaskan Yup'ik and Inupiaq with the state and the colonial government has been less advantageous regarding “self-rule.” The legacies of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) are complicated, offering unique opportunities for Alaska Native economic self-determinism (including health care), but can be seen as also undermining issues of sovereignty, self-governance, and subsistence rights (Huhndorf & Huhndorf, 2011). The group of Eveny reindeer herders and hunters is a small Siberian minority which over a long period of oppression by the Soviet and post-Soviet state has been forcibly prevented from exercising any form

of political and economic autonomy. As we shall see, these differences have profound implications for indigenous young people's perceptions of themselves, their identities, and the different scales of hardship and adversity within each community context. Youth from smaller and more disadvantaged groups have developed a more acute sense of marginalization, and their challenges differ in scope and severity from politically and economically more prominent groups.

In addition to such political differences, there is important cross-site diversity on the level of subsistence practices, livelihoods, and cultural systems. Yup'ik, Inupiaq, and Inuit, traditionally, are marine and tundra animal hunters and fishermen who occupy coastal areas of the American and Canadian Arctic. The Siberian Eveny and Norwegian Sámi, by contrast, are reindeer herders, whose socioeconomic systems depend on lichen pastures of tundra and taiga. Between Eveny and Sámi reindeer herders, there are also significant differences in the ways communities are economically maintained. For example, Sámi have incorporated large-scale industrialization within their traditional reindeer herding system using state-of-the-art technologies to manage reindeer and produce reindeer meat (Tyler, Turi, & Sundset, 2007). Eveny, on the other hand, have sustained their reliance on a hunting economy along with small-scale reindeer herding (Ulturgasheva, 2012; Vitebsky, 2005).

In this paper, we undertake a comparative analysis of findings from these five independent but interconnected research projects with a focus on understanding more about the experiences of contemporary youth in Arctic indigenous communities, and identifying resilience strategies that inform a successful transition to adulthood. The cross-site CIPA project design and methodologies have been described at length elsewhere (Allen et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva et al., 2011). Each study produced findings from an analysis of youth life histories from the particular community and these are presented in the papers of this special issue (Kral et al., 2014; Nystad, Spein, & Ingstad, 2014; Rasmus, Allen, & Ford, 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014). The study design involved: (a) monthly cross-site video-conference meetings to discuss findings from each local project site; (b) a review of each site's local findings; and (c) a cross-site workshop with researchers and community members to discuss findings and generate comparative categories reflecting youth resilience processes across sites.

The five collaborative contributions to this volume are the result of work conducted with different disciplinary approaches and research methodologies guiding the research process at each site. The papers present qualitatively different types of testimonies, methods of collecting information, engagement with the collected data, and proximity of university researchers to the participating communities. For example, the research data on Inuit youth provided by community members was processed by the team through the lens of cultural psychology and medical anthropology (Kral et al., 2014). The Alaskan Inupiaq narratives were collected by a non-Inupiaq interviewer and were interpreted by a public health research team with the guidance of a local steering committee (Wexler et al., 2014). The Norwegian Sámi interviews were personally gathered and interpreted by an

indigenous investigator (Nystad et al., 2014). The Siberian Eveny youth narratives and ethnographic case studies derive from ethnographic research in the community as well as translation, transcription, and data analysis carried out by a social anthropologist (Ulturgasheva, 2014). And the Alaskan Yup'ik work was carried out collaboratively in the community by an indigenous social scientist, a clinical community psychologist and graduate students (Rasmus et al., 2014). It is important to highlight that these investigators included three indigenous scholars whose personal perspectives, local expertise, and extensive fieldwork in the communities contributed significantly to the shaping of more detailed perceptions of the life experiences of young people, and to the common analytical framework of the study (Nystad et al., 2014; Rasmus, 2008; Rasmus et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2012, 2013, 2014; Ulturgasheva et al., 2011).

Cross-site consensus process

Each site created its own local codebook, utilizing modified grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) to generate site-specific codes using terms and identifiers specific to the linguistic, geographic and cultural characteristics of the community. Following grounded theory methods, the collected data was processed in a series of selections of site-specific codes extracted from the interviews. After each site had generated its own set of codes, the site-specific sets of codes were grouped into themes that could apply across sites. In order to accomplish the latter, we met together as a research team to determine the set of cross-site themes, which informed our preliminary understandings of shared youth resilience processes (see Table 1). Themes represent broad content areas that each site agreed could be found in stories from youth in each of the communities. We then linked the themes to local codes to ensure that each cross-site code had a meaningful cross-reference at each local site. The cross-site themes provide evidence for the existence of shared mechanisms underlying youth resilience processes across the circumpolar north. The analysis undertaken here involved the interpretive work of the lead author informed by each site's summary of findings and explorations of the cross-site codebook and the youth narratives. Coauthors added perspectives and data to help sharpen the analysis in ways that reflected site-specific findings. Moreover, the findings were shared with and discussed by indigenous youth, community members, and university researchers at the international CIPA study workshop at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural history in Washington DC in October 2012. During the workshop the youth and adult community members developed a list of common challenges and specified the coping strategies and resources that contributed to acquisition and attainment of resilience in each community.

The next section of this paper presents results from our comparative cross-site analysis and summarizes important characteristics from each site-specific project including local findings in two primary areas related to youth challenges and strategies for well-being, and comparative findings related to youth resilience process relevant across all five sites (see Table 1). In our comparative analysis, we

address the following questions: What are the common features of youth challenges and strategies for well-being in each of the five local sites? How do Arctic indigenous youth patterns of resilience and vulnerability indicate broader social and global processes? What are the defining or distinctive features of Arctic youth resilience processes? What interpretive framework can be utilized for understanding processes that contribute to youth resilience and vulnerability across five sites?

Comparative review of local site findings

Emergent themes arose from the analysis that pointed to strategies of well-being, which are linked to the particularities of the Arctic environments and cultural systems that young people experience as they grow up. These themes imply, at times, divergent possibilities for the youth to “do well,” “make one’s living,” “not to make it worse” and “stay resilient and strong.”

The questions of what constitutes a challenge and what implies a resource in each community do not have straightforward and clear-cut answers, but instead require detailed and long-term observations for understanding the complexity of social dynamics and the processes of growing up in the context of each community. With the aims of preserving this inherent complexity in our cross-site analysis we were driven to develop a robust, nonlinear, and dynamic model for understanding youth resilience while taking into consideration the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic background of each community.

In order to proceed to a more detailed discussion of the dynamic model of youth resilience, we will briefly situate the experiences of youth within the context of locally specific patterns that may be viewed in terms of both a challenge and a resource. The patterns entail social dynamics revolving around such everyday issues as boredom, bullying, problems related to alcohol and drugs, family dynamics involving troubled child–parent relations, violence, and mischief. General patterns across the sites also suggest that the aforementioned factors are related to the lack of opportunities for youth to exercise and master subsistence skills and their limited access to the land.

The most common factor which youth emphasized both as a resource for “doing well” and as a challenge that can “make things worse” was *schooling*. According to the data from the Yup’ik and Eveny communities, school is more often seen as an inhibiting structure and schooling presents barriers for some youth, that is, barriers to the “work” they feel they need to do at home and on the land for their families and siblings (Rasmus, 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014). For Inupiaq, Sámi, and Inuit youth, school provides access to opportunities, resources, and perspectives that they believe expand their future prospects and enrich their daily lives (Nystad et al., 2014; Wexler et al., 2014). Inuit youth also report having a high regard for education, yet over 75% drop out of high school (Kral et al., 2014).

Today schooling in Yup’ik, Eveny, Inupiaq, Sámi, and Inuit communities provides bilingual and bicultural programmes; however, quite often these programmes do not seek to maintain the indigenous language on an equal footing with the

Table 1. Comparative circumpolar youth stressors and resilience strategies.

Indigenous group	Geographic context	Stressors and resilience strategies (in order of importance)		
		Research methods	Local stressors	Local strategies
Eveny, Siberia	Eveny community in northeastern Siberia. Half of population is scattered around nomadic forest camps; half of population is settled in village. Subsistence based on reindeer herding and hunting wild game (moose, snow rams, and wild reindeer). Dramatic social changes associated with coercive sedentarization, introduction of state farm and boarding school in 1930s–1970s.	Ethnographic fieldwork. Community research. Interviews conducted, translated, and transcribed by PI. Ethnographic data analysis. Modified grounded theory coding of verbatim transcripts of narratives.	Transition from reindeer herding camp in forest to village at age of 7. Being separated from parents. Bad teachers. Boredom. Violence. Bullying. Drinking in the village/when parents drink. School. Poverty.	Subsistence skills. Movement between spaces/mobility. Sharing of reindeer meat and hunted game. Availability of safe homes. Inter- and intragenerational support. Solidarity through <i>naeker</i> ^a and <i>borichen</i> ^a . Kinship ties.
Sámi, Norway	Sámi community in Arctic region of Norway. Sámi constitute ethnic and linguistic majority. Reindeer husbandry contributes to preservation of Sámi culture and native language. Sámi educational institutions established in 1970s and 1980s produced qualified personnel and raised significance of Sámi native language which is increasingly used in public media, administration, and academia.	Participatory with local steering committee (LSC). Interviews conducted by PIs. Modified grounded theory coding of narratives using Atlas-ti (Muh, 2004) network analysis.	Rumours, bullying (exclusion). Group pressure (drinking). Balance between two cultures. Exclusion—struggle for inclusion. Boredom. Schoolwork—lack of motivation for school. Challenges in reindeer husbandry—lack of leisure time activities (boring). Leaving with one parent (mother), missing father, missing someone.	Talking with friends, siblings and cousins, young aunt and young uncle support. Support from grandparents. Godparents giving advice and support. Talking about the challenge to mother and other family members. Try to solve the problem themselves—be strong and courageous. Escape, avoid being involved, but also try to help (when someone is bullied). Being on the land. <i>Verdestallan</i> ^a .

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Stressors and resilience strategies (in order of importance)			
Indigenous group	Geographic context	Research methods	Local strategies
Inuit, Canada	Inuit community in Nunavut, Canada. Subsistence country food includes seal, caribou, walrus, Arctic char, whale, polar bear. Massive social change in 1950s and 1960s with Canadian government intervention.	Participatory with local steering committee (LSC). Youth-driven interviews conducted by Inuit, PI, and graduate student, ethnography. Modified grounded theory coding of narratives.	Talking to friends and family. Spending time and camping with family. Hunting. Being on the land. Ningiqtuq ^a .
Yup'ik, Alaska	Alaska Native village in south-west Alaska, on the Yukon river. Economy is based on part-time hunting, fishing, and gathering supplemented by wage labour. Subsistence based on seals, Pacific salmon, whitefish, whales, moose, birds, and tundra vegetation. Rapid social changes between 1900 and 1950 with American colonization and settlement.	Participatory with local steering committee (LSC). Youth-driven interviews conducted by PIs and graduate students. Modified grounded theory using network analysis.	Going to grandparents, parent, auntie, or other trusted adult (relative or nonrelative). Friends, siblings, and cousins (peer group support). Moving away or leaving. Not making it worse. Going hunting or getting out on the land or river. Having fun, playing sports (basketball). Going to school. Being with people who love you. Not thinking about things too much. Helping someone else. Prayer and belief in God and spirits. uqiquq ^a .

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Indigenous group	Geographic context	Research methods	Stressors and resilience strategies (in order of importance)	
			Local stressors	Local strategies
Inupiaq, Alaska	Alaska Native village in northwest Alaska, on the Bering sea coast. Over the last hundred years, the everyday lives of the inhabitants changed from a nomadic, family-based hunting and fishing subsistence life style to small, village settlements at the sites of mandatory mission schools. Economy today is mixed subsistence and wage labour.	University research team carried out study, guided by LSC of local Inupiaq youth, adults, and elders. Data collection included surveys, life timelines, and three interviews with each participant done by local community member. Narratives were written to summarize and integrate each participant's interview content. Modified grounded theory coding of verbatim transcripts using Atlas-ti. Literature review sensitized research team to resilience concepts.	Missing people. Being mean to me. Rough times: conflict with peers (fights or bullying), cliques (girls). Family problems. Suicide. Boredom. Messing up. Others "not being there for me." When parents drink. School—"less than" and greater than hierarchy, not finding learning meaningful. Not getting to "do culture" on the land.	Relying on close peer relationships. Developing kin-like relationships (relatedness). Getting support from mothers, parents, other adult family. Self-reliance. Building reciprocal material and emotional support networks. Not making it worse. Fulfillment narratives associated with culture, subsistence, time on the land. Developing a sense of competence. Being responsible and contributing to others <i>aatchuquutiliq avatmun</i> ^a .

Note. ^aSharing.

dominant language of the respective country. The schooling effectively aims to produce a society of “docile bodies through disciplinary techniques” (Foucault, 1977, p. 298), and is designed for “mainstreaming the students as quickly as possible” (Fienup-Riordan, 2000, p. 262) while largely reinforcing the value of being part of the wider, dominant (American, Canadian, Norwegian, or Russian) society rather than the value of being Yup’ik, Inupiaq, Inuit, Sámi, or Eveny.

The formation of strong constructions of identity requires continuity between the values and identifications learned in childhood and the roles available in adulthood, where those learned values can be expressed. Youth in the Arctic today find themselves searching for ways to put traditional native values and teachings into practice in the context of dominant Russian, American, Norwegian, and Euro-Canadian culture, and find themselves largely constrained by structural and institutional obstacles (see also Fienup-Riordan, 2000). Although youth across the five sites believe that they need to succeed in school to succeed in their future, many of them have trouble finding meaningful learning and teaching in the school environment. An Inupiaq boy explained how this tension was manifested in his conflicted aspirations:

My parents think that having a good paying job is a good life, but I think a good life is just being good, feeling good, doing good things, doing things that make you happy. Like sometimes you just want to like, I don’t know, live in a cabin like a long time ago, like fifty years ago.

As in this case, certain kinds of success, such as those based on imposed value and economic systems, can be difficult to navigate, effectively and practically.

Another factor which has the capacity to serve as both a challenge and a resource is *subsistence*. Youth from all five sites expressed willingness to participate in subsistence activities at a higher level than that at which they currently had access and opportunity. At each site they said that their inability to participate in subsistence activities because of the high costs of fuel, gear, and transport and their restricted access to the land was among the most significant challenges young people face today. Often feeling confined to the village or settlement, these young people are left to their own devices in dealing with such challenges as boredom, bullying, domestic violence, and various types of mischief such as substance misuse, stealing, robbery, and physical assaults. Their increasing marginalization from the land and subsistence ways of life occurs at all sites to greater and lesser degrees.

Furthermore, youth highlighted the support of *kin, friends, and parents* as having “the most potential to be acutely stressful but also crucially helpful” (Rasmus et al., 2014), with family experienced both as a challenge and as a resource for shaping resilience. All sites report that after having experienced several phases of externally imposed social change, older generations are less clear about how to help their children navigate through rapidly changing social conditions. Parents and grandparents struggle to adjust their parenting style to the new demands required for assisting youth as they become adults. For example, the Kotzebue data show how “imposed social changes resulted in literal communication gaps

between generations when grandparents speak primary Inupiaq and were brought up doing primarily subsistence to survive” (Wexler et al., 2014).

The relative absence of parental pressure, a lack of discipline, and what sometimes seems to be a lack of interest in the lives of children and teens by parents in the communities are often viewed as the source of youth boredom and mischief. But these traits cannot be simplistically labeled as “bad parenting.” Such nonintrusiveness provides an opportunity for a young person to work out individual solutions required for survival on the land and was (and in some communities still is) the most effective strategy in rearing future hunters and reindeer herders (e.g., Balto, 1997; Bodenhorn, 1988, 1997; Briggs, 1998; Condon, 1988; Rasmus, 2008; Ulturgasheva, 2012). However, lack of parental involvement has particular implications, especially in the context of settlement life where there are a variety of youth activities that may fulfil individual needs but contribute negatively to the collective. Expectations for youth have changed dramatically. As a result, various forms of mischief (drinking, interpersonal drama, getting into fights, robbery, glue or petrol sniffing) are fairly common. These behaviours make sense as social responses to the restricted structural and social arrangements of modern settlements, and may even be seen as contemporary stand-ins for more traditional puberty or “coming of age” rites in an increasingly peer-group-driven passage to adulthood (Ulturgasheva, 2014).

In a modern peer-group-focused culture in the Arctic, traditional kinship systems represent both resource and challenge, especially in acts of bullying. The issue of the dual capacity of kinship and its role will be discussed in the section Kinship Ties. Here, we would like to highlight how the social logic behind acts of bullying can be understood by the history of the place and the community, especially in the context of a group’s long-term defence of its territories and anticolonial resistance. For example, in the Sámi community, young people reported that youth who do not speak their native language are likely to be subject to rejection by others who speak Sámi fluently. Sámi youth identified “being not accepted by the community due to lack or poor Sámi competence” as one of the youth stressors (see Nystad et al., 2014). Hence, inability to speak a native language becomes a mechanism of social exclusion. Conversely, speaking one’s native tongue can be an assertion of cultural identity in which a sense of belonging is articulated in explicitly oppositional, territorial, and boundary-defining terms. The meanings associated with language fluency can create anguish for those who may be unable to meet such requirements and who, as a result, remain alienated and marginalized by their cultural group of peers. Additionally, these same young people, because of their indigenous status, are marginalized by the dominant society. This situation leaves little room to manoeuvre, and can be understood as a contributing factor in bullying.

Circumpolar youth resilience strategies

Youth from the five Arctic communities participating in this study are developing and deploying new strategies for dealing with new issues and challenges. In the

context of a modern settlement these strategies include everyday activities such as sports, games, online social networking, “romantic relations,” gambling, and “hanging out” (Condon, 1988; Kral et al., 2014; Nystad et al., 2014; Rasmus et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014).

In the face of pressures and challenges, youth are developing specific capacities to navigate successfully through them. However, as the case examples in this volume describe, successful transition to adulthood is possible only if a young person has access to the necessary social and economic resources critical for movement through the developmental stages (Ulturgasheva, 2014). Additionally, the flexibility with which young people navigate the distinct expectations of different spheres of their lives (i.e., school, family, and land) enables resilience (see Wexler et al., 2014).

Following Kirmayer and colleagues (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Kirmayer, Sedhev, Whitley, Dandeneau, & Isaac, 2009) and Ungar (2011), who suggest that there is a need for a nuanced, ecological perspective incorporating the various contingencies and fluctuations of cultural and developmental variables that shape resilience processes, we focus here on the interlinked and complicating nature of situations of vulnerability and resilience across five communities. In order to deal with the complexity of youth resilience in a nuanced way, we introduce a flexible model of resilience, using the concept of a sliding scale to represent four sets of community-level factors that potentially facilitate indigenous youth resilience: movement, kinship ties, subsistence, and sharing.

The sliding scale of indigenous youth resilience

Our research provides specific evidence for how, in the face of pressures and challenges, youth are able successfully to negotiate and navigate their transition to adulthood through the development of resilience capacities and engagement of particular resilience strategies. The Siberian site paper describes how the acquisition of such potential is possible only if a young person is given or has received access to social and economic resources. Resilience for Eveny youth quite often depends on which space (forest or village) adolescents come from and what survival and social skills they have already mastered (Ulturgasheva, 2014). In this sense, access to resources is implicated in a composite of short-term and long-term factors, which are mutable and contingent upon spatio-temporal, relational, and contextual variables. Regarding the latter, it is important to take into account that negative experiences do not inevitably precipitate negative outcomes and that much depends on context.

The transactional-ecological perspective considers the multiple levels of influence shaping resilience processes (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993), and the notion of atypicality suggests that behaviours adapted to a distinctively configured cultural ecology may not “work” in other settings, but are developed when alternative and more conventional pathways to development are blocked (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent, 1999). The common feature of resilience and vulnerability lies in the

fact that youth acquire vulnerability and/or resilience in the face of adversity and hardship in nonequal measure, depending on myriad fluid and relational contextual factors.

We represent this flexible model of Arctic youth resilience using a graphic that illustrates the ways that youth strategies move within and between adaptive and resilience-promoting and maladaptive and more risk-associated actions and responses (Figure 1). For example, family can be considered both as a challenge and as a resource for shaping resilience. In other words, utilizing the idea of complexity (Ungar, 2011), what has been a resource at a certain point in a young person's life can become a source of vulnerability at another time. Although the concepts of complexity and atypicality are not new, they play out in specific ways in indigenous Arctic communities. In the communities represented in this study, young people's potential for resilience is activated by patterns of relatedness that nurture and support youth adaptive responses to risk and vulnerability (Kral et al., 2014; Nystad et al., 2014; Rasmus et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014). For instance, Eveny youth refer to movement and the ability to stay mobile as a critical condition for individual and family well-being. Mobility, then, is a key component of resilience, providing young people with a navigational resource to "avoid conflict" and "not make things worse." Further, the development and maintenance of kin-like relationships widens the scope of possibilities for taking such actions. These contingencies suggest that indigenous youth resilience should be viewed as part of a nonstatic continuum involving all sets of variables and spatio-temporal dimensions found in local resilience patterns.

Figure 1. Sliding scale of “positive” and “negative” influences moving between resilience and vulnerability.

Any attempt to draw a single unified model representing indigenous youth resilience will ultimately fail due to the inherent and shifting complexity of its subject matter. Linear process models cannot account as well for the cyclic and contingent qualities of resilience and vulnerability so determined by fluctuations of cultural and developmental variables (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Moreover, the construct of resilience and its positivist or essentializing interpretation, which points mainly to an individual's success and accomplishment, may prevent us from capturing the complexity of the contexts in which Arctic adolescents live. As Titus states, "Resilience research tends to forget the hidden costs paid for successful...[survival] previous traumas or psychological scars often accompany the resilience that persons attain in hardship and adversity" (Titus, 2007, pp. 28–29). The integration of trauma into a resilience framework can condition individual or community responses to hardship in ways that may be unpredictable (Ungar, 2011).

Recent scholarship with indigenous communities in North America has considered the current impact of historical trauma and colonialism on American Indian and Alaska Native people (Duran, Duran, Yellow Horse-Davis, & Yellow Horse-Davis, 1998; Evans-Campbell, Lindhorst, Huang, & Walters, 2006; Gone, 2007; Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002; Wexler, 2009a, 2009b). Even when a person or a community reconciles and integrates traumatic experience, the latter does not disappear as if it never happened. Hence, resilience cannot be construed simplistically as "invulnerability" or as the idea that everyone can succeed when faced with difficulty (Titus, 2007, p. 29).

We propose here instead a bifurcating but interconnecting model using the metaphor of a "sliding scale" which may account for dynamism between its components, that is, for situations which may tip towards either pole of resilience or vulnerability (Swancutt, 2012a, 2012b). Swancutt (2012a, p. 104), in a discussion of fortune and resilience among Buryat Mongol, demonstrates the capacity of "fortune to fluctuate between its highest and lowest points as a result of just one significant action or series of actions," thus generating a weak or a strong potential for resilience. Her ethnography shows that, "when fortune has weakened and is left untreated...its weakness leads to further weakness, making fortune decline in downward spiral" (2012a, p. 105). Conversely, "improvements to fortune can make it rise continually upwards, enhancing a person's life prospects" (2012a, p. 109). She suggests that fortune tends to rise and fall gradually in either an upward or a downward spiral, thus affecting a person's capacity for resilience. This dynamic view of human resilience as implicated by fortune's movement upwards or downwards is important for understanding Arctic indigenous youth resilience.

Following Swancutt (2012b), our model representing Arctic indigenous youth resilience using a sliding scale is intended to reflect the contingency and interdependence of resilience and vulnerability and their capacity to move between their lowest and highest points. This movement reflects the dynamism of resilience patterns. The real experiences of young people in their transition to adulthood do not fit one fixed model. For example, the Eveny concept of *khinem* refers to the

dynamic quality of personal resilience that fluctuates along a scale. This is echoed in the interviews with Inupiaq and Yup'ik youth who respectively describe resilience as flexible and rooted, "bending like a willow in the wind," and dynamic and transformative, "a broken spear into an arrow." The notion of a sliding scale allows us to engage with different degrees of a young person's resilience and vulnerability within particular frameworks of time and space.

This sliding scale is also relevant to consideration of situations of risk and hardship which are locally specific and require a pool of locally available resources. As Ulturgasheva's (2012) ethnography suggests, certain challenges and risk situations shape the survival skills and resilience of adolescents in particular contexts, such as a reindeer camp in the forest. However, the skills which an adolescent acquires may not protect him or her in the face of difficult situations in a different social context, such as in the space of the village, facing separation from parents, bullying, interpersonal violence, or alcohol abuse. Hence, those who are viewed as resilient in one social and geographical space may be vulnerable in another, and those who may cope well and show signs of resilience one time may become quite vulnerable another time.

The coping strategies and the capacities for resilience vary from one period of life to another. New challenges and traits of resilience may emerge during developmental transitions throughout the life course as well as during periods of adversity (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010; Ulturgasheva, 2014). In our cross-site analysis, we noticed a set of shared social resources that can be understood as a "positive influence" that contribute to personal and communal resilience.

Movement and being on the land

The value of movement and the role of being on the land was emphasized across sites. For example, going out on the land calms Inuit youth who are in trouble and brings families closer. For Inupiaq youth, the opportunity to leave the village and go to the country offers them access to a different, better way of being, one focused more on survival and fulfilment rather than on the trivial issues of village life (see Wexler et al., 2014). Sámi youth described the more vital perspective that they gained through participating in subsistence activities, which was seen as important for getting through difficult times (Nystad et al., 2014).

Another example that illustrates the significance of movement and engagement with the land comes from the Siberian Eveny. Risky situations in the forest, including predators or river floods, can be both life-threatening and resilience-producing, as these situations promote highly active and instrumental reactions among youth. Youth resourcefulness, based in reindeer herding and hunting skills, is often acknowledged by elder members as positive indicators of growth and achievement in the face of dangerous situations across sites. Therefore, a forest youth's ability to exercise personal agency in life-threatening situations can be viewed as a "positive influence" moving towards resilience. In contrast, when youth are deprived of the opportunity to exercise a forest type of agency this

may lead to emotional frustration, interpersonal conflicts, and isolation within the village context (Ulturgasheva, 2014).

In the northwest Alaskan site, hunting and fishing and other land-based activities are venerated, and access to “the country” is mediated by a host of interpersonal and economic factors. Lack of access to hunting, fishing, or going to camp can impede a young person’s ability to be involved in a whole complex of socially and culturally vital arrangements such as intergenerational knowledge transmission, family bonding and participation in vital harvests, and the rites of passage that accompany them (Wexler et al., 2014). The importance of such arrangements remains central to Yup’ik youth experiences, as seen in the importance placed on the first successful hunt, which is still critical for a young man’s acquisition of social competence and maturity.

Kinship ties

Analysis of the practices of bullying among Eveny, Inupiaq, Inuit, Yup’ik, and Sámi youth suggests that in most cases they rely on the support of peers for conflict resolution (Kral et al., 2014; Nystad et al., 2014; Rasmus et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014). Young people report that they are expected to figure out how to respond to bullying, and sometimes, particularly for boys, their response can generate respect or scorn from peers. Depending on the personal and gender expectations of the person being bullied (younger girls being more likely to receive active help), parents or senior family members sometimes act to resolve such situations (Wexler et al., 2014). In certain cases, however, a parent’s involvement might be detrimental for a young person’s further integration into the peer group (Ulturgasheva, 2014).

The data from Eveny, Sámi, and Inupiaq sites suggest that youth bullying should be viewed in terms of the complex dynamics within the community. Kinship ties serve as one of the grounds on which bullies pick a victim. Grievances may stem from conflicts between factions and long-term feuds within the community and some acts of bullying among youth may reflect larger interfamilial conflicts that can go back for generations. As a part of an extended family, youth inherit their family’s grievances and disagreements. These disagreements often extend over many generations and the intergenerational outcomes of such conflicts impact on youth’s overall sense of well-being and security in their own community (Ulturgasheva, 2012; Wexler, 2005). Just as in Swancutt’s discussion of the “inherited curse” (2012a, pp. 34–36), the inherited conflicts may serve as evidence of a “fallen fortune,” which moves the balance towards vulnerability.

Intergenerational family relationships can also strengthen ties between youth. Although Eveny youth talk about peer support in terms of friendship, Ulturgasheva’s ethnographic observations also suggest that inter- and intragenerational kinship ties still play a crucial role in peer relationships. She observes that a young person’s parents usually convene with the same people, that is, their relatives and friends, and children of these select friends and relatives are most likely to be

part of a young person's intragenerational peer group. This suggests that, in the Arctic, kinship still serves as a basis for a young person's smooth integration into a peer group. A younger Inupiaq boy described this connection: "Yes we've been friends since my dad and his dad are buddies. So when we were little he used to always come over." These life-long friendships are also talked about in terms of adopted kin. Moreover, youth contribution to the collective labor of the kinship-based community remains an important factor shaping their sense of camaraderie and solidarity as a generation or group of peers. The latter serves as a positive force that moves in the direction of resilience.

Subsistence

Although limited access to land resources has led to a lack of opportunity to hunt game or engage in fishing, the participants from this study place great value on the transmission and acquisition of essential survival techniques and opportunities for family bonding (see Table 1).

For Inuit, Yup'ik, and Inupiaq boys and young men, hunting remains a critically important activity that has become increasingly difficult to sustain at levels that contribute meaningfully to their resilience. Opportunities to go out hunting and fishing are more limited now for youth due to the unavailability of snow machines or boats, and the high costs of fuel and hunting gear. Having a male relative in the family with the resources to take the younger males out hunting and fishing is one of the most important contributors to resilience for young Inuit, Inupiaq, and Yup'ik men.

Engagement in subsistence activities is a vital component of indigenous adolescent maturation and development. The celebration of a youth's first successful hunt among Alaskan Yup'ik not only serves as a formative and critical event in the young person's gradual acquisition of social competence and maturity but also is an affirmation of male adolescents' agency and potential for resilience (Rasmus et al., 2014). Engagement in hunting and gathering activities is part of becoming "a real person" (the names Yup'ik, Inupiaq, and Inuit literally mean "real person/people"), and attaining full adult status and personhood.

The Eveny data illustrate that a girl's active engagement in practices such as crafts and artwork also has a productive impact, shaping and strengthening young women's cultural identities (see also Ulturgasheva, 2012, pp. 89–91). Other Eveny practices such as dancing, singing, sewing, drawing, beading, and working with animal fur and skin also contribute to resilience. Across sites, subsistence practices build capacity for a young person's individual and social expression. Subsistence-based values and practices entail a great number of social occupations, and their attendant aesthetic, expressive, and therapeutic qualities foster adolescents' imagination, reasoning, memory, as well as social and emotional competence. These practices help youth work through difficult issues, reframe and interpret particular events, invent scenarios that reflect their inner world, or project themselves imaginatively into the future. These processes

appear to be tied to sustaining long-term well-being and support the resilience of Arctic indigenous youth and their communities.

Sharing

Another positive force that moves young people towards the acquisition of resilience is the opportunity to share. The ability to give others valued resources such as berries, wood, or meat affirms a young person's agency, and builds resilience. The practice of "sharing," or *borichaen* among Eveny, *uqiquq* among Yup'ik, *verdestallan* among Sámi, *ningiqtuq* among Inuit, *aatchuqtuutiliq avatmun* among Inupiaq, remains an important facilitator of communal solidarity and is a key component in maintaining exchange and kinship relationships between persons, households, and residential communities. Through the multiple relationships involved in material exchange, it is possible to recognize sharing as a community-level resilience strategy that mitigates situations of temporary hardship, adversity, and social distress. For example, youth from all sites were involved in informal sharing practices associated with a particular rite of passage (e.g., first marked reindeer, first hunt, first dance, *yoiking* [Sámi throat-singing], etc.). In their personal accounts of "sharing," Siberian Eveny, Inupiaq, and Sámi described their specific understanding about how one should share, at what time, and in which space (Bodenhorn, 2000; Ulturgasheva, 2012). This awareness and the enduring practices signal the importance of sharing as a medium of social and spiritual engagement, occurring on both the levels of human-human and human-animal relationships. Indigenous Arctic sharing strategies are also material expressions of social resourcefulness centered on the concept of reciprocity. Participation in subsistence activities facilitates sharing and promotes youth well-being in Arctic communities, most of which favor sharing practices rather than market relations and strategic investment in social rather than economic capital.

Sharing is not restricted solely to practices of material exchange, but is extended to sharing of one's living space through the provision of safe, non-violent, and welcoming homes for family members, friends, or neighbours in need of such space (Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014). Availability of such homes, and the ability they afford young people to choose safer and more reliable households within the community, continues to serve as an important source of security. In this respect, Bodenhorn's (2012, p. 6) account of Inupiaq adoption practices is highly relevant for our discussion as she highlights that "Inupiaq households are fluid, with children easily moving between extended family members for a meal or a night." Such relations generate real, rather than fictive, kinship, and point to the importance of the extended rather than "substituted" kinship universe of a child or adolescent in the Arctic. Our data also illustrate that the availability of extended homes provides an important cultural mechanism to mitigate vulnerabilities and enable young people to rely on emotional and moral support provided by

their welcoming hosts (Kral et al., 2014; Rasmus et al., 2014; Ulturgasheva, 2014; Wexler et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Our comparative study looking for shared processes across five Arctic indigenous communities provides a model for collaborative approaches to exploring contemporary youth experiences and resilience. We have shown that when facing situations of hardship and adversity, youth from each community deploy socially important and locally accessible resources. Even though the nature of hardships and challenges has changed and these are now largely an outcome of postcolonial modernity, indigenous youth still rely on important and integral aspects of community life such as sharing, extended family, fluid households, kinship-based peer networks, subsistence activities (reindeer herding, hunting, fishing), and culturally valued practices (speaking the native language, beadwork, traditional dance, *yoiking*, sewing traditional clothes). Thus, young people in our participating communities are still drawing from community strengths and culturally integrated mechanisms of protection as they creatively reimagine and strategically gain access to available resources.

The sliding scale proposed in this paper approaches Arctic indigenous youth resilience as part of a dynamic continuum, fluctuating between resilience and vulnerability. This allows us to capture youth's complex negotiations on their path to adulthood, and consider how young people flexibly optimize available, though not always reliable, local resources. Arctic indigenous vulnerability and resilience are interconnected in practice, sharing an internal capacity to slide between positive and negative influences.

We hope that our findings will be relevant for health intervention and prevention researchers and service providers working to reduce health disparities in substance abuse and suicide experienced among Arctic indigenous youth. Creating the necessary conditions for acquisition of resilience by youth requires increasing access to key resources and contexts for well-being in the community. Findings from this cross-site, comparative study point to the need for policy-level action to support the development of healthy indigenous youth and communities in the circumpolar north.

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