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In search of relationality in scholarship: Opportunities for decolonizing the discipline of political science

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Introduction

Vine Deloria Jr. (Sioux nation) argued that Indigenous studies are an 'orphaned' discipline in academia;[2] with no appropriate departmental or faculty home, such programs were often ostracized within the academy. He later wrote, with Wilkins, that political science is the 'midwife' or most appropriate disciplinary home for Indigenous studies.[3] We argue that both positions are applicable to the contemporary state of the disciplines – and present reflections that we hope will be applicable to other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.[4] Political science is specifically interesting insofar as it is framed by theoretical and methodological conformities that limit what can be seen as political, at the same time as it is shaped by theoretical and methodological

[1] We are extremely grateful to the Editor-in-chief of the journal, Dr. Jatinder Mann and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions on our article.
[2] Vine Deloria, Jr., "Indian Studies: The Orphan of Academia," *Wicazo Sa Review* 2, no. 2 (1986).
[3] Vine Deloria, Jr. and David E. Wilkins, "Racial and Ethnic Studies, Political Science, and Midwifery," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14, no. 2 (1999).
[4] More than most other disciplines, political science has a tendency toward methodological nationalism given its focus on the state and on the organization of political life around polities dominated by one or a few nations. As a result, many of its subfields tend to follow state borders. Any debate around the discipline must then address national debates; thus, we work within the Canadian context and hope that our reflections will be applicable to other settler colonial states, leaving it up to scholars to create their own analogies around their own geopolitical configurations. This article began as an attempt to take up a call by the Canadian Political Science Association for its 2021 conference around the theme of "Diversity and the Discipline of Political Science" which asked: "are political science methods and approaches sufficiently diverse? Are there confining boundaries? Are there gatekeepers? How can methodological diversity in political science advance and support EDI and indigenization and decolonization priorities? Where are the barriers and failures? Where are the opportunities and successes? Can political science serve as a model for other disciplines, and in turn what can we learn from them?" (2021 Conference Program Committee, "Call for Proposals," Canadian Political Science Association, 2021, https://mycpsa.cpsa-acsp.ca/cfp/cfp_index). These questions – and our own as stated in this article – form the starting point of our reflection.

pluralities that can support a more appropriate inclusion of Indigenous political knowledge as it can currently be found within Indigenous studies.

Using *keeoukaywin* or the Visiting Way[5] as a guiding methodological framework, we assess reasons for both skepticism and support for the placement of Indigenous studies around political science given the hostilities and compatibilities of these two disciplines. How theory and methodology underpin systems, structures, and practices, forces us to question how Indigenous politics – as it is practiced and studied – and Indigenous political knowledge are excluded from the discipline and often made to be invisible. We argue that the pluralities within political science's theories and methodologies also offer opportunities for braiding these disciplines together and for wider influences of Indigenous politics over Western political science (that is, the political science that takes place in societies whose cultural origins can be found in Europe and in colonialism, and focuses on those societies' political life), all the while recognizing the limits to any braiding and the limited span in time of such an approach.

It may be that with some rearrangement to make room for Indigenous epistemologies and political ontologies, political science can be a temporary home for Indigenous studies within a hostile academia. Here, despite fundamental conflicts, there may be sufficient commonalities in the objects that we seek to understand to allow for cohabitation – for a time.

Section 1: From Orphan to Midwifery: Situating Indigenous Studies around the Discipline of Political Science

[5] Janice Cindy Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (2018).

We trace the questions at the heart of this article to the work of Vine Deloria Jr. and, more broadly, to the colonial and racist assertions that Indigenous and Black peoples are not fit for intellectual labour and have no culture that is worth knowing – thus, that they have no perspective of their own. At stake in Deloria's recalling of these assertions are the reasons for the birth of ethnic studies programs.[6] He explains that these were created in the United States of America in reaction to the development of anthropology around the study of Indigenous peoples, that of sociology around Black and Chicano peoples, and religious studies around Asian peoples – but also as a response to the demands of civil rights movements.[7]

In Deloria's account, ethnic studies programs were created with soft money, without tenure, ensuring that non-white faculty and programs would remain temporary and under constant threat. Due to these program restrictions and deficits, no relationships were created between contract faculty and communities. These educational responses, therefore, did not favour Indigenous faculty, students or communities, but instead the universities through higher enrollment. Indigenous students, thus, found courses irrelevant to them because these focused on the needs of non-Indigenous students, they found themselves unprepared by the colonial school system to succeed in universities, and the lack of relationality added to the co-opting of community demands as the programs failed to address the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the wider society.

Deloria's answer to these problems came in the form of transition year programs which create community, allow Indigenous students to learn their history and culture in a

[6] Deloria, "Indian."
[7] *Ibid*.

suitable context, and liberate Indigenous faculty to focus on other duties than mentoring students. Here, the broader issue of an Indigenous perspective is not entirely addressed, except perhaps in the form of the material conditions of its presence in universities. Left orphaned, Indigenous studies would need a certain degree of separation to do what cannot be done in the traditional university context; this includes connecting with Knowledge Guardians (also referred to as Elders, Knowledge Keepers or Old Ones) and learning from them. And here we see one important principle: specific programs and spaces ought to exist for Indigenous-centred scholarship development, teaching, and learning.

With David E. Wilkins, Deloria presented a series of arguments for political science to take up the work of ethnic studies.[8] This is an alternate response to the needs of Indigenous peoples regarding higher education and what Deloria calls the broader society around them. First, political science had already undertaken the work of bringing attention to histories that are ignored, misrepresented, and advocate for change. The discipline could then be an alternative to the social movements whose demands found an incomplete and marginal response in ethnic studies.[9] Second, as already noted, the other social sciences had already lost the trust of Indigenous peoples and other racial and ethnic minority groups. In contrast, political science maintained

[8] Deloria and Wilkins, "Racial."
[9] In no way do these undertakings wipe away what Ferguson names the "morass of racial hierarchies, civilizational categorization, and normative settlement" that has indeed made up political science throughout its history (Kennan Ferguson, "Why Does Political Science Hate American Indians," *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1031). As Ferguson argues, political science participated in the same institutions as other disciplines and certainly played its part in the domination and genocides of Indigenous peoples. We argue that any preference for political science over other disciplines in adopting the orientation Indigenous studies gives to scholarly work can thus only be relative and pragmatic, working through a strategy of imminent critique and internal transformation of degree-granting institutions as one part of a broader transformative and decolonizing strategy. Autonomous Indigenous institutions remain necessary for the transmission and development of Indigenous knowledge.

more humility (or perhaps more distance). Third, as Deloria and Wilkins frame it, 'The areas of most significant concern for racial and ethnic minorities are precisely those areas in which political science has great expertise.'[10] These areas include the participation in and image wider society has of these groups, influencing decision-making and transforming institutions, and the renewal of theories of social organisation.

The fourth and perhaps strongest argument for bringing some aspects of Indigenous studies into political science is that it focuses on political institutions: Indigenous peoples, like racial and ethnic minority groups, have all encountered these institutions through wider society in ways that have a negative impact on them. These encounters take place in their daily lives, from exclusionary laws to policing and to discrimination in health and educational contexts, and in their attempts to overcome the social barriers that reinforce marginalization. Limiting the account to Indigenous peoples, we see the inherent relationships to the land transformed through the imposition of the Doctrine of Discovery and later the notion of title; legal status through the relationship of guardianship-wardship; and nation-to-nation relationships through trusteeship and a forced state of dependence. These political institutions can only allow for entrance into the colonial society without giving them a clear or permanent place:[11] racist, discriminatory, and exclusionary practices prevent stability and long-term participation in institutions. This lack of a clear place follows from the assumption of their inevitable disappearance and the dedication to making this disappearance a fact through genocide.

[10] Deloria and Wilkins, "Racial," 70.
[11] *Ibid*., 72.

Additionally, these specific institutions that are central to settler colonial systems were seldom studied until recently. And Deloria and Wilkins indirectly point to that problem by highlighting that political science tends to be reductionist, leaving too many elements of social organisation to other disciplines. This insight can be developed further, as we will do below: political science may not be able to see Indigenous social organisation and political institutions because of its focus on the state and the party form, sovereignty, and theoretical texts. Thus, political science can learn from the kinds of transformation that would allow it to see other political realities and ways of being and acting. As Deloria and Wilkins suggest, political science would have to be broadened to properly understand the role of state political institutions in relation to Indigenous peoples. It would also have to develop methods and approaches that would allow it to adequately address Indigenous political life as it continues to stand apart from colonial political life and institutions.

In the thirty-five years since Deloria's work, these situations of Indigenous scholarship remain much unchanged. Whereas it is now possible to name Indigenous political scientists and even Indigenous politics programs, we argue that the discipline has merely moved from exclusion to marginalization. While the concerns and methods proper to the study of Indigenous political knowledge and Indigenous politics were once simply excluded, they have been included in such a manner as to maintain them at the margins of the discipline. In this manner, they can be studied, but do not (yet, perhaps) disrupt the discipline's central ways of conceptualizing or studying politics. At most, we could speak of a very limited Indigenization of the discipline, where room has been made for a few Indigenous scholars to do their work within boundaries that discipline

their time, work, themes, approaches, and collaborations so that they resemble those of their non-Indigenous colleagues – and in no way would these meaningful but hard-won, often short-lived, rarely supported or buttressed, and easily reversed changes amount to a decolonization of the discipline.

Similarly, Ladner argues that until the 2000s Canadian political science mostly addressed Indigenous politics through the state and its relationship with Indigenous peoples – and did so very rarely.[12] Ladner attributes the growth in interest to the constitutional and land claim negotiations that began in the 1980s[13] and to the confrontations with and resistance to the state that took place in the early 1990s.[14] It was in 2000 that Green argued that 'It is the contestation about the legitimacy of the state that challenges European colonial and therefore contemporary settler-state sovereignty, and that forms the basis of rights claims'[15] and emphasized the centrality of Indigenous culture and nationhood against the focus placed on the framework and liberal ideology of the colonial and assimilatory state. Rebecca Wallace's recent work further demonstrates that political science has changed very little in regard to the inclusion of Indigenous-centred scholarship at the graduate level.[16] While the focus on the state remains dominant today, Indigenous political traditions are more often recognized and studied, and the problem in the relationship is more often seen as originating in the state.[17]

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[12] Kiera L. Ladner, "Taking the Field: 50 Years of Indigenous Politics in the CJPS," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 1 (2017).
[13] *Ibid*., 170.
[14] *Ibid*., 171-172.
[15] Joyce Green, "The Difference Debate: Reducing Rights to Cultural Flavours," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 1 (2000): 137.
[16] Rebecca A. Wallace, "Beyond the 'Add and Stir' Approach: Indigenizing Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists in Canadian Political Science," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 3 (2022).
[17] Ladner, "Taking," 173-174.

Heeding Deloria's warnings and taking up his suggestions requires that we build upon these disciplinary transformations, which are grounds for hope, even as the neoliberalization of higher education may present new challenges, not the least through lessened faculty input and austerity measures. The metaphor of political science as a midwife present in Deloria and Wilkins' text indicates the powerful, yet limited potential of the discipline, which is meant to help and a home – at least for a while, and without taking the leading role away from Indigenous scholars.[18]

Section 2: Methodologies and Methodological Tensions

In reflecting on the possible relations between political science and Indigenous studies, with an eye on decolonization, we moved away from wondering about *what* practitioners of the discipline could do. While the actions on a list such as that offered by Ferguson can go a certain way toward Indigenization and toward incorporating Indigenous political knowledge,[19] such actions can only open the way to more fruitful dialogue and might in fact lead to the appropriation of Indigenous political knowledge. We moved instead toward relationality, following the idea that relations between disciplines and fields of study are ultimately relations between people recognized and accepted through institutionalized means, together with the enforcement of norms regarding knowledge and methods that leads to the denial of relations with other persons. *How* we come to know, and those *with whom* we learn and teach, then matters just as much as *what* we know.

[18] Deloria and Wilkins, "Racial."
[19] Ferguson, "Why Does Political Science Hate American Indians?", 1033-1035.

We framed this article with the methodology of *keeoukaywin* or the Visiting Way.[20] Gaudet, from the Métis nation, explains that *keeoukaywin*, which is Cree for visiting, is an Indigenous research methodology that is decolonising. It requires the researcher, through a practice of visiting or taking the time to be completely present with what is often a lengthy research process, to locate themself in the work and, also, to connect more broadly to community or kinship.[21] Visiting methodology is, therefore, a practice of relational accountability to self and community.

To implement this research practice, we met regularly for virtual tea – due to the public health restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic – to discuss our scepticism and support for the placement of Indigenous studies and knowledge systems within political science, developing the content that frames the following sections.

According to Gaudet, of particular importance to visiting methodologies is relationality or responsibility to the community.[22] Gaudet writes that 'Indigenous research methodologies aim to revitalize our ways of living and being well in relation, and help us to remember what is important and for whom, as a way to reclaim teachings, songs, stories, values, dignity, and land.'[23] Through our visits, we discussed the foundation of relationality that is embedded in *keeoukaywin* methodology and what this might mean for our work at hand.

Relationality is a common feature of Indigenous worldviews or ways of knowing throughout the world. Relationality, or having a relationship with another being, knowledge system, or other, is a complex concept that will mean different things

[20] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin."
[21] *Ibid*., 51-53.
[22] Ibid., 48-50.
[23] *Ibid*., 47.

according to the specifics of the Indigenous worldview that is framing it. Many scholars have described this concept, and both of us have spent countless hours with Knowledge Guardians as they share teachings and help us understand and practice these social constructs. While relationality is a complex Indigenous social philosophy, it can be said to be a practice of mutual or collective benefit that extends to all living beings. Hart, from the Fisher River Cree Nation, explains that 'key within a relational worldview is the emphasis on spirit and spirituality and, in turn, a sense of communitism and respectful individualism. Communitism is the sense of community tied together by familial relations and the families' commitment to it.'[24] From this, we can perhaps understand that relationality is about connections of or through worldview to all those with whom we hold relations.

Similarly, Kimmerer, from the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, writes 'the synchrony of our Gathering is determined by our leaders, but more importantly, there is something like a mycorrhizal network that unites us, an unseen connection of history and family and responsibility to both our ancestors and our children.'[25] In this statement, we get a sense of deep and unseen connections amongst community. These connections extend to those who came before and those who have yet to come: the collective (and its responsibilities to one another), in many Indigenous worldviews, includes more than the membership that is present.

Bringing Indigenous ways of knowing into academia is a complex process that has often resulted in damaging outcomes such as appropriation, inaccurate, and

[24] Michael A. Hart, "Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work* 1, no. 1 (2010): 3.
[25] Robin W. Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Milkweed Editions, 2013), 21.

inappropriate applications of such knowledge.[26] Scholars and Knowledge Guardians have done work to demonstrate ways to bring Indigenous knowledge into academia in a good way. These examples can include framing knowledge mobilisation through relationality. For example, the Cree scholar Shawn Wilson's work on Indigenous research methodologies explores relationality and relational accountability within research practices.[27] It demonstrates that, as he writes, 'Indigenous researchers develop relationships with ideas in order to achieve enlightenment in the ceremony that is Indigenous research.'[28] By bringing the Indigenous-framed concept of relationality into academia, Wilson demonstrates how Indigenous researchers uphold and apply their specific knowledge systems within academic processes and structures without damaging outcomes. This application of relationality and academic contexts will be revisited further in this article.

For us, as scholars in political science, colleagues, and friends, we queried how our relationality to one another framed these meetings. For example, Jérôme is a settler scholar who grew up in Québec on unceded territory and lived briefly in Ontario on territory covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and has lived in Alberta and Saskatchewan in Treaty 6. Emily is a Métis scholar who grew up in Treaty 1. We work together at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, which is situated in Treaty 4 with a presence on Treaty 6 lands; these are the (always unceded) territories of the nêhiyawak

[26] Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Purich Publishing Ltd., 2013); Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University: Responsibilities, Indigenous Epistemes and the Logic of the Gift* (UBC Press: 2007); Verna St. Denis, "Aboriginal Education and Anti-Racist Education: Building Alliances across Cultural and Racial Identity," *Canadian Journal of Education* 30, no. 4 (2007).
[27] Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood Press, 2008).
[28] Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, back cover.

(Cree), Nakawēk/Anihšināpēk, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda nations and the homeland of the Métis and Michif nations.

It is in this place that we have had many discussions over the years on political philosophy, systems, and institutions. There is, therefore, familiarity with our ideas, an eagerness to build on common or shared knowledge, and space for respectful debate and disagreement.

Our attention turned to books through these visits and our discussions of Indigenous studies and the discipline of political science.[29] As we grappled with ideas presented by Deloria and Wilkins[30] around the appropriateness of Indigenous scholarship and knowledge systems within political science, we carefully considered the ways books, generally speaking (but one could be more specific and include those wider bearers of western knowledge including articles, conferences, physical spaces, and classrooms), have a relationality with us as scholars. We began to conceptualize our relationality with each other as one important feature of our visits, but that required us to revise or extend our dialogue to include those books that shape our understandings of these disciplines.

Taking up relationality with books might require thinking differently from applying an Indigenous-centred approach of relationality to the written form. Indeed, in the sense of Indigenous teachings, we understand that relationality is about relationship – through dialogue – and accountability to others. It is dynamic, not static. Imbued within this societal framework are the tenets of reciprocal relationality: mutuality flows between and

[29] By "books," we mean the printed and screened word, be it a traditional printed book or the many objects, material and virtual, that have been created on their models, such as printed journals, online journals, electronic books, or open electronic resources, for example.
[30] Deloria, "Indian."; Deloria and Wilkins, "Racial."

amongst organisms sharing knowledge and experience.[31] To simply apply this kind of relationality to a form such as a book would be inappropriate and even disingenuous. As Maggie Walter (palawa nation, Australia) and Chris Anderson (Métis nation) have written on Indigenous research practices, 'it's not as simple as: "add indigeneity and stir"….'[32]

It is inappropriate to use Indigenous knowledges outside of the processes within which they are developed: specific lands, language, and the Knowledge Guardians and sharers who keep it alive. Here, we see a deep methodological tension to our query of situating Indigenous studies around the discipline of political science and our understandings of these disciplines, which are reinforced through books.

Yet, as we unpacked our relationality extending to books, we reflected on what books have given to us and on our relationality to them or, as Wilson describes, our 'relationship to ideas.'[33] This might not be a dialogue: that is true. Books, however, do provide information, knowledge, and context that the reader absorbs, reflects and builds on, and then mobilizes. There is a living and emergent nature to this process. And, as readers might similarly attest, one often creates a relationship with their book: solace, intrigue, learnedness or discovery, laughter, tears, and even contempt are reactions that can be conjured through the act of reading. As Merleau-Ponty explains, there is an exchange in books, which serve as mediations and communication: 'they are in the end nothing but more coherent speech.'[34] Books go beyond their own existence as an event

[31] Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Purich Press, 2000); Wilson, *Research.*
[32] Maggie Walter and Chris Anderson, *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* (Routledge, 2016), 17.
[33] Wilson, *Research,* back cover.
[34] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Éloge de la Philosophie* (Gallimard, 1953), 42.

in time and allow us to return to the moment its writing crystallized and engage, even if symbolically, with their author.[35] Merleau-Ponty also reminds us that we relate to authors as writers, that is, as a person in the always unfinished process of writing: we interrogate their reasons for writing and our reasons to read them, to carry with us what they tell us. We can seek in the book, and around it, in what the author has said elsewhere, to understand what value they gave it, what led to its writing – just as we can ask ourselves what someone is telling us, teaching us, when we meet them in person.

If we bring this relationality and act of visiting with books to how we understand the discipline of political science, we might pinpoint a source of colonialism within the discipline and its knowledge-holding resources that demonstrate those conditions ripe for decolonial analysis and action. This gets us closer to our work in Indigenous studies and its potential compatibility with political science or those underlying hostilities. For example, within the discipline of political science – through a practice of relational accountability – we can perhaps find space for Indigenous knowledge systems to exist within the field and not be submerged by the assimilative forces of colonial and western knowledge. Through this framing, can we hold books (and their authors) to account for the kinds of scholarship that do lead to assimilation of Indigenous studies within disciplines such as political science?

As we applied our approach to the methodology of *keeoukaywin*, we grappled with such an application of relationality to books. We queried if referencing other people's work is relational. As the feminist queer writer of colour Sara Ahmed explains, references are a way to attend to those who come before us: ‘citation is how we

[35] *Ibid*., 67.

acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow.'[36] Yet, citations are also materials: they force distance, they separate, they allow us to do different things, they make us do different things and they commit us to practices. We come to books because we are sent to them, directly, by teachers, supervisors, peers, reviewers or as a matter of expectation. Or as a matter of habits of thought: when a writer cites Merleau-Ponty, he also limits his view of colonialism by relying on someone who may have been much too optimistic about the possibilities for reform. Someone who only read what other white French men wrote about colonialism and left aside the ideas of even those like Frantz Fanon and Tran Duc Thao who both relied on Merleau-Ponty's thinking to develop their radical critiques.[37] Thus, relating to Merleau-Ponty to understand political life might then open to repeating colonial logics and limit the theoretical scope of this attempt. Our conflict at hand is mitigating the repetition of colonialism that is present in so much of those we cite, in these authors who have been canonized or whose ideas form the frame of reference for our work or even the discipline. Ahmed argues that this enacts citation policies that are racist and sexist: these citational practices take up the wider structures and lead to events and papers that only, or mostly, include white men and, thus, standard citational practices reproduce whiteness.[38]

[36] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017), 15-16.
[37] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 2008); Tran Duc Thao, "On Indochina," *Études Phénoménologiques – Phenomenological Studies* 5 (2021). The question of relationality as a problem of political philosophy is developed in Jérôme Melançon, "Altérité, relationalité et pouvoir : Jean-Toussaint Desanti et Tran Duc Thao après Merleau-Ponty," in Jérôme Melançon, ed., *L'intervalle du pouvoir. Postérité politique de Maurice Merleau-Ponty* (Kimé, 2022), 43-64.
[38] Ahmed, *Living,* 148-151.

Furthermore, books make communities. Ahmed explains that we gather around books, in person or in our reading of academic work, and we pass them on, materially or through our citations.[39] Her development of a personal citation policy – to not cite white men to disrupt and create community differently, with different people – is one way to deal with these tensions created by our visiting with books. The Nishnaagbeg political thinker and writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson deals with these same tensions by turning to practice and meeting the requirements of a form of thinking that requires presence.[40] Indeed, relational modes of thought are at their most potent where dynamic relationships can take place, where each adjusts to the others, where all contribute to a collective endeavour. Without defining power in this passage, Simpson points to the strengthening of relationships, the visioning and creation of new realities, and the challenge to colonialism.[41] Mediated – recorded or printed – expressions, as is the case with books, lose this dynamic character by becoming unilateral and, with it, lose some of their potential for transformation. However, only *some* power and potential are lost and, as Ahmed helps us see, this loss has to do with the relationship between the writer and the reader and not with relationships that are facilitated by books – and so otherwise mediated through objects passed between people and discussed by people who can meet in person.[42] In other words, changing our citations practices is also changing our relationships and our relationality, since it allows us to turn toward others both in text and in person.

[39] *Ibid*., 17.
[40] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011), 41.
[41] *Ibid*., 34.
[42] Ahmed, *Living.*

Section 3: Conformities: On Repeating Colonial Logics in Political Science

We can further wonder to what degree other practices in political science, as in most other academic disciplines, repeat the logic of unilateral relationships. In conferences or the publishing process, for example, the logic of presenting a set of findings and then adjusting them after the fact, is repeated. We suggest here that differences of an epistemological and ontological nature between political science and Indigenous political life lead to these logics and are obstacles for the discipline to understanding Indigenous political thinking and action. In fact, this difference makes it difficult, if not entirely impossible, for political science to even see the political phenomena at the heart of Indigenous collective life. Without offering an exhaustive description of such differences, we can point to a series of conformities across the main subfields of the discipline (comparative politics, international relations, political theory, and Canadian politics). These conformities (or assumptions, core concepts, habits, and traditions of thinking that are expected) are the core beliefs that are tied to traditions that shape the practices and ideas of the discipline. And in large part, they have to do with our reliance on books as a medium, a reliance that functions through a set of practices that are not embodied in the same way as the beliefs, values, and concepts at the heart of Indigenous political knowledge and action. While we could expand upon many such conformities, we will limit ourselves to one significant example: we find the state at the heart of all subfields of political science, as the expected content of most analyses, even if only as a part of the larger determining context.

In comparative politics, it is difficult to think about political belonging and individual and collective action outside the state. In a fashion similar to comparative politics, ethnography, and political theory inspired by Pierre Clastres describes Indigenous nations as societies against the state, keeping it a central explicative factor even in its absence.[43] Another example of a state-centred view is the turn toward speaking of citizens of Indigenous nations, instead of members of these nations, to highlight that this belonging is political and not associational, or even identity-based – without making it clear that this belonging is relational. Would it be possible to speak of citizenship without reference to the state? What does political belonging outside the state look like? Answers to these questions can be found within Indigenous political traditions: we might characterize these as socio-political traditions such as clan systems, kinship networks, familial networks, and so on, and we would better understand them through concepts as they are named in Indigenous languages and used in a variety of practices. However, these traditions that are reflective of colonial imposition have also been adapted to respond to the state, which is now an unavoidable part of Indigenous political life. As a result, it has become more difficult to experience and conceptualize non-state centred forms of political belonging. Decolonisation in a settler colonial context thus tends to lend to finding ways to exist apart from the state, without focusing on the relationship to the state. And political movements such as land defender and water protector movements have shown how traditional and emergent forms of leadership can arise in contradiction to the forms of leadership that have been imposed and recognised by the state. Yet, while their actions develop further political

[43] Pierre Clastres, *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1989).

coherence, they are generally understood in terms of their success in affecting the state – as are most social movements.[44]

In international relations, we find that the assertion of the state results in difficulties of nation-to-nation relationships. The recognition of the nationhood of Indigenous peoples is an issue, in part because there is no agency equivalent to the state that can act as an interlocutor (here we recognize that there are indeed long-established political orders that might exist on global, national, and/or sub-state levels, but we are making a distinction from those decision-making representative bodies that have functions equivalent to nation-states). Indigenous rights, or the collective and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, that are not exercised through a state do not find a clear expression in international law, even as they might be recognized in some documents or declarations. Sovereignty is also assumed as a correlate of nationhood/statehood – even if it exists as something between the legitimisation of a monopoly over violence or policy, to slightly transform Weber's phrase, and what the Kahnawake Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson describes as the right to govern and to kill Indigenous people who are already dying or dead.[45] We can indeed wonder whether the 'sovereignty as Indigenous belonging, dignity, and justice'[46] she describes and places between quotation marks is anything like the European concept of sovereignty, whether it can have any content when approached through the state. Expectations as to behaviour in the context of international relations also owe much to the structures of states: accountability is held by majorities within their citizenship and

[44] Jérôme Melançon, "Idle No More: A Movement of Dissent," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (2018).
[45] Audra Simpson, "The Sovereignty of Critique," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (2020).
[46] *Ibid*., 686.

not to partners in these agreements nor the citizens of partner states – and certainly not, as the Métis anthropologist and fish philosopher Zoe Todd instructs us, to hold treaty with non-human beings.[47] Treaties and alliances delineate and separate to allow for an end to conflicts. The establishment of Indigenous-centred kinship, for instance, is then difficult for political science to understand as a political process, and it is often left to anthropologists or sociologists to study as a more specific case of human, not political, interaction.

Political theory places us in more direct conflict in ontological and epistemological terms. The focus on Western cultures in political science is commonly known and is tied to a hierarchical view of human groupings, notably through racist (political) science. A deeper anthropocentrism also exists, which bars the inclusion of non-human beings in politics – in treaties, in coexistence, in reciprocity – and even exceeds the framework of animal rights, defined by liberal notions of representation, voice, and protection. Epistemologically, what counts as knowledge, who knows, how we engage with them, through what practices political knowledge is developed, what the reasons are for seeking this knowledge: in short, what we must do to understand the meaning of political events and action favours certain understandings of political actors that are tied to institutions and roles within them that do not necessarily have counterparts in Indigenous political life.

As far as theoretical conceptual work is concerned, the need to translate Indigenous political concepts leads to non-sense (or at least a dramatic change in meaning) in at least two ways. First, as we saw above, it forces a search for nations, for

[47] Zoe Todd, "Fish, Kin and Hope: Tending to Water Violations in Amiskwaciwâskahikan and Treaty Six Territory." Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry 43 (2017): 103-107.

citizens, for citizenship; it is expected that these concepts are universally valid and that they refer to concrete entities and agencies. The use of 'nation' then might lend to the kinds of problems tied to strategic essentialism. Second, by privileging English and French in Canada, as languages to speak about politics and that must be spoken in politics, the need to translate a diversity of concepts into two languages creates an expectation of similarity across Indigenous cultures. Not only is it difficult (as well as unwarranted) to look for the equivalent of European concepts in Indigenous politics, there are no direct equivalences among Indigenous peoples either, especially where relationships were more distant between peoples of what Picard calls 'cultural families.'[48] For example, while similarities may exist among the Indigenous peoples of the Plains, the structure of the Seven Council Fires for the Oceti Sakowin Oyate does not correspond to the structures to which nêhiyawak refer as wahkohtowin (which 'kinship' does not accurately render). James Tully also points to differences between political languages, which are modes of communication, different from spoken languages and often existing within a spoken language. He defines political language while referring to negotiators at a treaty as a 'mode of speaking and listening, form of reaching agreement, and way of representing the people, or peoples, for whom they speak.'[49] Translation only leads to subordination of the language of origin to the language into which it is translated.

Finally, the very exercise of political theory in political science makes it difficult to see Indigenous-centred theory where it takes place. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

[48] Ghislain Picard, *Entretiens*, ed. Pierre Trudel (Boréal, 2009).
[49] James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 129.

defines theory as 'entities, explanations and engagements that bring about meaning to both the individual and collective.'[50] She describes a practice that finds its embodiment in other practices, a theory that is not separate from other aspects of political life (of what political science would view as collective life), rather than creating a position of the scholar at a distance from political action. Of course, some political theory presents a conception of theory as needing to be brought closer to political activities and actions, without necessarily succeeding in overcoming that divide. For instance, Tully seeks to bring political theory into dialogue with social and political movements, acknowledging that both activities take root in the same political life.[51] Likewise, much of Marxism has been preoccupied with the question of *praxis* – of a theory that would be based in the emerging class consciousness of the proletariat and would further raise class consciousness and spur action.

It is not happenstance that such a divide exists or that political science cannot 'see' much of Indigenous politics as politics. There is a relationship of mutual reinforcement between political science and the society in which it takes place, which can be observed in the subfield of Canadian politics. As Audra Simpson points out: early settlers saw Indigenous political orders *as political*.[52] The settler state in what has become Canada established its relationship to Indigenous peoples through a denial of the political nature of the relationships internal to communities, between communities and nations, and to the land and other relevant beings. For example, the Numbered treaties were signed as an assurance of coexistence, in a process analogous but

[50] Simpson, *Dancing*, 46, note 57.
[51] James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key, volume 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[52] Simpson, "Sovereignty," 690.

different from the signature of treaties in Europe so as to respect Indigenous political organisation and practices, even as the intent to create a cession of land was hidden from Indigenous signatories.[53] The same has been said of the scrip process amongst the Crown and Métis peoples.[54] As elsewhere, political science developed through a response to the challenges of ruling within a state and over colonized peoples in an imperialist framework.[55] Political science studies and describes political practices and values as they are lived, offers suggestions for these values to be better pursued, and offers new values and pursuits. In other words, its relationship to political life is a metapolitical one, which repeats the stages of the public policy cycle. To transform political science in Canada and allow for Indigenous studies to find a place around the discipline also opens further possibilities for transforming Canadian political life and institutions, so that Indigenous peoples are no longer simply contained – displaced, disappeared – within them.

Ladner's overview of the evolution of the relationship of Canadian political science to Indigenous politics presents a series of principles that narrow the gap we have just surveyed.[56] These principles recognize that Indigenous peoples political traditions and thought play the central role in Indigenous politics and pre-existed colonization: thus, these see Indigenous peoples outside of the frame of cleavages, interest groups, or Charter groups that exist today within Canadian society and its state. These principles centre Indigenous peoples rather than the settler state and its

[53] Sheldon Krasowski, *No Surrender. The Land Remains Indigenous* (University of Regina Press, 2019).
[54] Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (University of Regina Press, 2015).
[55] Robbie Shilliam, *Decolonizing Politics: An Introduction* (Polity Press, 2021).
[56] Ladner, "Taking."

concerns. And not as subjects but as actors who confront colonialism and racism and seek pathways toward the transformation of the state 'to address the fact that it exists on someone else's land'[57] and 'to engage in epistemological and ontological pluralism.'[58] We must, therefore, understand what such pluralism entails.

Section 4: Pluralities: On Situating Indigenous Studies around Political Science

The previous section on conformities demonstrates how Indigenous politics – as it is practiced and studied – is excluded from the discipline's subfields and often made to be invisible. In this, we see opportunity for the decolonization of political science (with broader implications for Canadian politics, in general) through the presence of Indigenous studies, its work around decolonialism, and building anti-oppressive structures, systems and realities for Indigenous peoples. We also argue decolonization can occur following the transformation made possible through the braiding of Indigenous politics and political science's pluralities, by developing relationality to books, political actors, and political networks.

These opportunities begin with the kind of work that Indigenous studies make possible and how this might extend to political science. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains that 'transforming ourselves, our communities and our nations is ultimately the first step in transforming our relationship to the state.'[59] Thinking about Indigenous political existence requires a series of other practices: it requires taking up traditions that enable an Indigenous political existence. Language learning and ceremony, for

[57] Ladner, "Taking," 176.
[58] *Ibid*., 175.
[59] Simpson, *Dancing*, 17.

instance, are then political. Interpretations are embodied and lived. But, what precisely within political science would allow us to see these practices of resurgence as political?

Simpson explains that social movement theory, as one example, does not allow for it: it is 'inadequate in explaining the forces that generate and propel Indigenous resistance and resurgence' and it 'ignores the historical context of Indigenous resistance [...] by disregarding differences in political organisation, governance and political cultures between Canadian and Indigenous societies.'[60] The problem is that, much like political science in general, social movement theory takes the existence of specific states for granted and so misses the contestation of their legitimacy. But the problem is also that its ontology does not allow us to see the deeper forces that lead to this refusal.

The production of Indigenous knowledge systems is a site of tension for the existing pluralities of political science: this knowledge production is situated outside of the university. Authentic Indigenous knowledge is produced within Indigenous communities and passed intergenerationally through Knowledge Guardians and sharers. This knowledge production source is different from Western knowledge that might be sourced and conveyed through literature, conferences, classroom discussions, and so on. This difference in knowledge production and transmission creates two problems for the discipline of political science when engaging with Indigenous knowledge: 1) it does not control the knowledge production, and 2) the politics and practices of accessing and bringing this knowledge into the space of academia is a

[60] Simpson, *Dancing*, 16.

politically fraught practice as there are many examples of the inappropriate, inauthentic, and damaging ways this has been done.

This tension in knowledge production is connected to the oft-quipped distinction between Indigenous worldviews and Western or culturally dominant worldviews. This difference is accurate; however, this construct often leads to a dichotomy between two worldviews that suggests a collapse of both Indigenous and Western or culturally dominant worldviews into two sets of uniform ways of knowing. Such a collapse, based on this dichotomy, is inaccurate as Indigenous knowledge systems are instead distinct from one another and specific to a nation, community, geographic place, or family. These knowledge sources and practices reflect the lands to which the language and cultures were born, developed, and continue to be practiced and lived. It can be said that, due to the fundamental and ongoing relationships amongst Indigenous peoples and ancestral or traditional lands, there are shared characteristics amongst Indigenous knowledge systems. However, if we try to define these knowledge systems in definitive terms, we will be unsuccessful. As Kwakwaka'wakw scholar and geographer Sarah Hunt writes, 'its relational, alive, emergent nature means that as we come to know something, as we attempt to fix its meaning, we are always at risk of just missing something.'[61] We understand that Indigenous worldviews are alive, as Hunt explains, and thus are knowledges in flux as would be any other living being.

As these knowledge systems are brought into academia, scholars often attempt to pinpoint a definitive nature to these ways of knowing. In reflection of Hunt's work, we can likely surmise that this attempt to contain Indigenous knowledge is misguided and

[61] Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept," *Cultural Geographies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 31.

impractical. Such attempts might remove these knowledge systems from its guardians (those Old Ones and Knowledge Keepers who tend to it and take care of it) and its sources (the land, language, ceremonies, cultures, and so on). This removal can sever the important ties to knowledge creation that give life to and sustain these knowledge systems, which are, in Indigenous worldviews – and as we understand – alive.

In contrast, let's consider knowledge production in academia and the traditional discipline of political science: its libraries are warehouses of ideas that are expressed, at times, through stagnant words that, some argue, lose their dynamism once in static written form.[62] Such sources of knowledge that make up this education system represent an evident clash or disconnect from Indigenous knowledge systems, its production, and mobilisation. Many scholars have demonstrated the outcomes of this uneasy fit.[63] It often results in the misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge, its misapplication and can damage relationships between Indigenous peoples and those in academia.

As discussed, during our *keeoukaywin,* or regular visits, we became increasingly interested in how books might hold relationality and queried the connection of relationality through books to open political science to discourse on decolonialism. Given what we know about the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge systems when situated within academia, we had to think through this connection: we did not want to appropriate an Indigenous-centred epistemology. Suppose the discipline of political

[62] William Bauer, “Oral History,” ed. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O’Brien, *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* (Routledge, 2017); Renee Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod, eds., *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics* (Fernwood Publishing, 2008).
[63] Battiste, *Decolonizing*; Kuokkanen, *Reshaping;* Camille Callison, Loriene Roy, and Gretchen A. LeCheminant, eds., *Indigenous Notions of Ownership and Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (De Gruyter, 2016); Linda T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

science is serious and committed to Indigenous scholarship thriving within its domain. How do we grapple with these two very different sources of knowledge production and mobilization? Can the pluralities make space for this knowledge production, and does this open political science to better understandings of Indigenous notions of politics through relationships?

Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie's work on Critical Place Inquiry allowed us to query if books could similarly be place and thus hold relationality to open the discipline of political science for decolonial inquiry, theory, and practice.[64] Critical Place Inquiry is critical engagement with colonisation and concepts of place that are mobile and changing, including interactive or dynamic social and performed practices as a means of decolonial practices.[65] From this, we understand that place is about spatial recognition in exchange with social interactions, relations (in an Indigenous-centred sense, so this includes non-human kinship networks), and concepts that bind society.

Based on Critical Place Inquiry, can place include books? Can relationality extend to books? Consider that books move with people and are taken up and read in different locations, informing the recognition and appetite for the knowledge within. Does thinking of place as including books open the process of decolonisation to Western literatures and, by extension, the discipline of political science? Edward Said has demonstrated how knowledge production, specifically in the colonial context, is biased and shaped by its producer.[66] Métis academic and political leader Howard Adams has explained, in his aptly named book *Prison of Grass*, that part of the

[64] Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie, *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (Routledge, 2015).
[65] *Ibid*., 19.
[66] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin, 1977), 9-10.

Indigenous-centred experience through colonisation is that the mind is shaped on a subconscious level by a status quo that upholds colonial-produced and enforced ideals, which those who are subject to colonial orders often, without realisation, subconsciously reproduce and try to live up to.[67] We could correctly describe this process as assimilation, but Mi'kmaw scholar Battiste gives us a more pointed concept: 'cognitive imperialism.'[68] She explains that those who are colonized often take up the colonial project through the imposed education systems, public spaces, and knowledge productivity which are shaped by and, in turn, shape colonial inequity as the norm or status quo. This normalisation or unconscious uptake is quite difficult to articulate and distinguish as colonial inequity because members in a society cognitive processes are shaped in ways that make its normalcy near invisible.

While books, as demonstrated above, can hold clear intent for colonial expansion and entrenchment, decolonisation is, however, much more complex than what can be done through and upon literatures. It does require a reckoning of land bases. Land and natural resources are the cornerstones of colonial projects.[69] Decolonisation is about the reclamation of Indigenous people's ancestral land bases,[70] and includes the revitalisation of Indigenous governance systems, cultures, and languages, all of which are connected to lands and components of Indigenous social structures impacted by

[67] Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Fifth House Publishers, 1993).
[68] Marie Battiste, "Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation," In *Indian Education in Canada: The Legacy, volume 1*, eds. Jean Barman, Yvonne Herbert, and Don McCaskell (University of British Columbia Press, 1986).
[69] Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Fernwood Publishing: 2015); Glen S. Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
[70] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

colonial projects.[71] Therefore, we might ask: if decolonisation is a process to undo colonialism, its exploitation, oppressions, and inequities, how do books produced through Western knowledge processes reproduce colonial tenets – and can political science as a discipline better take up this work by focusing on the place that books hold in the intellectual landscape of the discipline?

Another point to consider is how books provide important analytical tools to deconstruct and undermine systems of political and colonial inequities. Within both political science and Indigenous studies, such books exist. For example, several Indigenous scholars write books that allow their ideas around resurgence and overthrowing colonial systems to reach wider audiences. Indigenous authors such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg nation) and Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene nation) both offer examples of how Indigenous resistance and resurgence movements can exist and thrive within the confines of academia.[72] This is an important aspect of knowledge mobilisation and one that Indigenous (Teme-Augama Anishnabai) scholar Dale Turner has dubbed the integral work for Indigenous liberation movements of 'word warriors.'[73]

There are, similarly, books of Western or culturally dominant orientation that can support Indigenous liberation movements by examining power relations within Western societies. For example, the works of Gramsci[74] and Althusser[75] describe the mechanisms within Western societies that reinforce dominant cultural, political, and

[71] Joyce Green, "Towards a Detente with History: Confronting Canada's Colonial Legacy," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 12 (1995).
[72] Leanne B. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press: 2017); Simpson , *Dancing*; Coulthard, *Red*.
[73] Dale A. Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe* (University of Toronto Press, 2006).
[74] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks 1-3* (Columbia University Press, 2011).
[75] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press: 1971).

economic systems which maintain power relations that uphold inequities throughout a society. These works, and others, can be used in liberation movements such as Indigenous-centred decolonization to underscore the approaches of power relations in Western societies. Gramsci's work on society's ruling classes demonstrates how state and private institutions work to uphold and reinforce the cultural hegemony of the ruling classes and thus to maintain power with less violence or coercion: essentially, the ideological nature of cultural hegemony ensures that a greater number of members of a society accept their societal, political, or economic constraints.[76] Gramsci influenced Althusser, who argued that the state's ideology is inscribed and indeed active within social institutions, political and economic systems, and more potently in our psyches: subjects do not produce themselves, but are instead continuously formed by processes they cannot control as nexuses of social relations and above all of relations of production.[77] To extrapolate and take colonialism into account: the physical removal of an imperial government is not necessarily the end of colonial rule as relations of production and colonial relations continue to shape people and their relationships. These works open an understanding of what might be invisible or, when recognized, accepted systems of power in Canadian politics which indeed shape our ways of being and relating. Among the many works like these within Western philosophies, many lead to or support the thinking of mobilizers of social change, which might benefit Indigenous liberation movements.

The benefits of braiding these disciplines extend to both Indigenous studies and political science. Moreton-Robinson of the Quandamooka nation, Australia, has argued

[76] Gramsci, *Prison.*
[77] Althusser, *Lenin.*

that Indigenous studies must take up traditional or mainstreamed academia: however, it ought to do so to demonstrate the limitations of Western and other culturally dominant knowledge systems.[78] Indigenous studies can benefit from these activities as it has been influenced in its development by the othering that results from colonial contact and oppression. Because of this, Indigenous studies became a discipline of cultural difference. Yet, cultural difference is not what makes an Indigenous person Indigenous: it is the relationships or kinship networks that includes specific connections to lands.[79] And so, the epistemic foundation to Indigenous studies ought to shift to one that does not respond to cultural difference but is productive of authentic Indigenous knowledge. Part of this epistemic shift is an analytical engagement with the Western or culturally dominant knowledge production that led to the original epistemic framework of cultural difference.[80] Thus, Indigenous studies can demonstrate deficits in academic knowledge production and can use these knowledges to better to inform its liberation from the conformities of academia.

There is a real tension, however, when applying any Western or culturally dominant books to movements for Indigenous liberation. As mentioned earlier, these works can support colonial logics. One example can be found in Kulchyski's *Aboriginal Rights are not Human Rights*,[81] which is critical of applying liberally-oriented philosophies to Indigenous rights movements that have a different orientation built on Indigenous knowledge systems (which are distinct from Western or culturally dominant

[78] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
[79] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, xv.
[80] *Ibid*., xvi.
[81] Peter Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights are not Human Rights* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2013).

systems of knowledge). Kulchyski argues that this application, specifically through the language and organisation of universal human rights movements, does not support and protect the distinct collective cultures of Indigenous peoples. Instead, the movements that work to regain ancestral lands, preserve Indigenous languages and cultures, and revitalize Indigenous governance in the face of the settler colonial government are premised on Indigenous worldviews.[82] When these movements are envisioned through liberally-framed rights movements and discourses, those resistance movements such as Aboriginal rights movements are negatively impacted. This might include processes that lead to the co-optation and appropriation of Aboriginal rights by liberal rights movements, which might alter or redefine Aboriginal rights through Western or culturally dominant orientations.

Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Mask* demonstrates the restrictive nature of Western thought in Indigenous politics but suggests a mitigating approach.[83] Here it is argued that while the political relationship between the Canadian settler state and Indigenous nations shifted from genocide and assimilation to a conciliatory practice of recognition and accommodation, it remains fundamentally a relationship of colonial inequity that disempowers Indigenous peoples. In this work, Coulthard relies on Marx's work on primitive accumulation, but tempers this recourse to Marxist theory and writes: 'as suggested above, rendering Marx's theoretical frame relevant to a comprehensive understanding of settler-colonialism and Indigenous resistance requires that it be transformed *in conversation* with the critical thought and practices of Indigenous

[82] *Ibid*.
[83] Coulthard, *Red*.

peoples themselves.'[84] In this example, a Western political philosophy is used to provide critical analysis to settler-colonialism in Canada to model transformation of the inequities that reinforce the suppression and assimilation of Indigenous peoples; however, the Western-orientation is unpacked, and those tensions around worldviews are accounted for.

As demonstrated, there are instances that Western or culturally dominant knowledge bases can be used to both support Indigenous liberation movements and instances that it leads to assimilation. We have argued there is potential within political science to support Indigenous liberation, but mitigation is required to avoid repeating the logics of colonialism. Additionally, there are benefits for political science to access the analytical theory and methodology of Indigenous studies to assess and redevelop (if desired) the state of political science. This might support a transformation to allow political science to be able to *see* Indigenous social organisation and political institutions beyond its current focus on the state and the party form, sovereignty, and theoretical texts.

Conclusion: Rearrangements to Situate Indigenous Studies around the Discipline of Political Science

As faculty members in a Canadian university, having studied political science respectively in Canada and in France, we have taken as a starting point the existence of political science within the Western university and we have sought to find out how it can account for Indigenous political knowledge. Within universities, this knowledge most

[84] *Ibid*., 8.

often exists within Indigenous studies, which has a status that is somewhere between a discipline and an interdisciplinary field. Within Indigenous studies, this knowledge exists in relation to other sites of knowledge transmission, development, and production proper to the many Indigenous cultures that can be found across the world, and which are the proper home for this knowledge. The question is especially difficult to answer, since political science continues to struggle with recognizing and interacting with the political knowledge developed by non-Indigenous political actors which it deems legitimate. Our focus on the discipline of political science is anchored in the conviction that we must combat epistemological imperialism to allow for the autonomy of Indigenous knowledge and thus of Indigenous studies and community-based political knowledge – as highlighted in Article 31 of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The relevance of the ideas Deloria and Wilkins have presented come from their suggestion that political science requires a broadening to properly understand the role of political institutions in relation to Indigenous peoples.[85] This includes developing methods and approaches to adequately address Indigenous political life as separate from colonial political life and institutions. We have argued that to situate Indigenous studies in relation to political studies, it must be around the discipline: not within. This requires a rearrangement of the discipline. While the existing discipline offers space for Indigenous studies through what we have called pluralities, its midwifery role regarding Indigenous studies maintains some limitations. Without rearrangement, the discipline will impose colonial logics of conformities through the subfields of the discipline:

[85] Deloria and Wilkins, "Racial."

comparative politics, international relations, political theory, and national or Canadian politics. The metaphor of political science as a midwife presented by Deloria and Wilkins indicates the powerful yet limited potential of the discipline, which is meant to offer assistance – for a while and without doing the work itself.[86] However, should the discipline be committed and open to new understandings of Indigenous politics, many benefits can be found for the discipline, including (and perhaps most notably) the critical analysis that Indigenous and anti-colonial perspectives will afford.

While our query in this article has been to map the limitations and opportunities for Indigenous studies to situate itself around political science for a time, we recognize there are contentious elements to this argument. For example, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson[87] and Audra Simpson[88] both lay out explicit refusals against any such connections between these disciplines and argue that Indigenous politics ought to turn away from the state toward Indigenous communities. Audra Simpson argues Indigenous studies are the refusal 'of power over Indigenous life.'[89] Both explain that relational membership for Indigenous peoples is not in relation to the state but to different bodies: peoples, lands, stars, non-human beings, and waterways, to name but a few. As such, political science cannot currently conceive of these political relations and, therefore, there is a continuing need for Indigenous studies to be placed outside of the discipline of political science.

Within Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Audra Simpson's refusals to situate within a colonial order, that which is reflected by political science, is the agency-centred

[86] *Ibid*.
[87] Simpson, *Dancing*.
[88] Simpson, "Sovereignty."
[89] *Ibid*., 695.

and autonomous work that is Indigenous studies. This idea builds on Audre Lorde's oft-quipped metaphor, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.' Audra Simpson writes, 'Native Studies developed in service to community, with critical commitments to protection of territory and decolonisation that extend to institutional and academic commitments and politics.'[90] This is the work of building a kind of house that is not of the master's making. This is the rearrangement of how we study political orders, Indigenous or settler colonial-framed. Take, for example, the Cherokee scholar Sakej Henderson's concept of Treaty federalism, which demonstrates how Canadian federalism currently exists in a form that—with some tweaks in practice—can more clearly and succinctly honour the nation-to-nation status of the First Peoples with the Crown as was initially intended during early diplomatic relations and Treaty-making.[91] Or, consider the work of the Anishinaabe/Ojibway scholar John Borrows, who demonstrates the ways that the Canadian legal order is built upon not just the legal methods imposed through the British common law and French civil orders, but that of the long-standing Indigenous legal practices of the First Peoples in what became Canada.[92]

Expanding on the metaphor of building houses, we argue that Indigenous studies might situate around political science: it has work to do and must see what surrounds it including as the land upon which it has established itself. The discipline in Canada has been complicit with and shaped by settler colonialism: it reflects the political practices of the state, its policies of colonial oppression towards Indigenous peoples, and its political

[90] *Ibid*., 686.
[91] James (S.) Y. Henderson, *Treaty Rights in the Constitution of Canada* (Thomson Carswell, 2007).
[92] John Borrows, *Drawing Out Law* (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

economies of imperial and, later, settler capitalism. An influence of Indigenous studies might deconstruct these long-practiced theories and methods, benefitting both disciplines: ensuring political science is more attuned to settler colonial realities and thus decolonising the discipline to enhance the academic landscape for Indigenous studies to be more successful in building its own house reflective of the relational accountability that is just one disciplinary marker that separates it from the political sciences.

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