

Rethinking Inclusion: Norm-Conditional Practices and Indigenous Resurgences

Edana Beauvais*

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According to most approaches to Western democratic theory, democratic governance begins with inclusion. In Western democratic theory, the question of inclusion in *what* is rarely interrogated, but often presumed. Political systems are considered democratic to the extent that actors are included in the social and political practices—often organized by state institutions—that allow actors to form judgments and influence collective decisions about issues that affect them. This article affirms the importance of inclusion for justice (in general), but draws on Indigenous and settler-colonial theories to show how certain taken-for-granted applications of inclusion can undermine the relationship between inclusion and justice. Solving the problem of norm-conditional inclusion in settler-colonial contexts requires *Indigenous resurgence*. This article concludes by centering insights from Indigenous political theory that point to pathways for decolonizing Western political thought and practice.

Keywords: Inclusion; Democracy; Justice; Comparative Political Theory

*Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, 79 John F. Kennedy Street, Mailbox 74 Cambridge, MA 02138.

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According to most approaches to Western democratic theory, democratic governance begins with inclusion. In Western democratic theory, the question of inclusion in *what* is rarely interrogated, but often presumed. Political systems are considered democratic to the extent that actors are included in the social and political practices—often organized by state institutions—that allow actors to form judgments and influence collective decisions about issues that affect them. This article affirms the importance of inclusion for justice (in general), but draws on Indigenous and settler-colonial theories to show how certain taken-for-granted applications of inclusion can undermine the relationship between inclusion and justice. Solving the problem of norm-conditional inclusion in settler-colonial contexts requires *Indigenous resurgence*. This article concludes by centering insights from Indigenous political theory that point to pathways for decolonizing Western political thought and practice.

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There is a well-theorized link in Western political theory between democracy and inclusion (Warren, 2017). Political systems are considered democratic to the extent that actors are included in the social and political practices—such as talking, voting, joining, and resisting—that allow them to form judgments and influence collective decisions about issues that affect them (Fung, 2013; Young, 2011). However, the relationship between political inclusion and democratic governance—and ultimately, between inclusion and justice—is undermined when inclusion is conditional on participating in a normative framework that is harmful to actors’ self- and collective identities or is conditional on participating in a normative framework that reconstitutes asymmetrical capacities for determining the conditions of one’s actions. This problem is most starkly revealed in settler-colonial contexts. When settlers invite colonized Indigenous peoples to participate in settler society on terms set by settlers—even if the goal is to deepen democratic governance and address harms of oppression—this can have the paradoxical effect of reinforcing injustices.

The first section defines the concepts of oppression and domination and reviews the conventional understanding in Western democratic theory about the relationship between inclusion and justice. This section outlines how participating self-development and collective rule requires participating in language games and shared life-ways. We begin with a discussion of language games and the backdrop of shared understandings that scaffold everyday action because language is constitutive of all other social institutions (Searle, 2005). Drawing on democratic theory, we review the concern that internalized inequalities often entail *internal exclusions*, which in turn contribute to injustices by blocking disempowered social group members’ capacities for self-development and collective rule (Young, 2000).

We then offer a significant theoretical supplementation to Western democratic theory. Drawing on insights from settler colonial theory and Indigenous political thought, we review why *more inclusion* does not always solve problems of injustice. This section reviews the concern that efforts to promote justice in settler-colonial contexts typically prescribe increasing the inclusion and participation of Indigenous peoples in settler practices, which are

often organized by state institutions. Because these practices are conditional on settler life-ways and state institutions, participating in these practices often entail harms of oppression and domination. To illustrate the limits of certain unquestioned applications of inclusion for achieving justice, we review three examples where deepening inclusion reinforces harms of oppression and domination. First, efforts to deepen Indigenous inclusion in Western legal procedures to protect lands (Alfred, 1995); second, inclusion in practices of reconciliation (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011); and third, inclusion in deliberation (Coulthard, 2010). However, abstaining from settler practices can also risk marginalization. The logic of settler colonialism seems to mean that either participating in or abstaining from settlers' norm-conditional social and political practices can leave systems of oppression and domination intact.

The third section centers the voices of Indigenous political theorists and reviews Indigenous thinkers' proposed solution to the problem of inclusion in colonial contexts: ethico-political resurgences and Indigenous self-determination (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011, 2017; Alfred, 2005, 1999). In this section, we draw primarily from decolonial writings situated in the Anglo settler colonies of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, but are also attentive to the Latin American school modernity/coloniality research (for a comparison and synthesis of these two schools see Singh, 2019). In this section we engage in comparative political theory in the sense of taking seriously the idea that political philosophy does not exist only in text; rather, political theory is also constituted through *practices* (Rollo, 2018; Jenco, 2007; Tully, 2016).

The goal of this paper is *not* to cast doubt on the value of inclusion as a guiding principle per se; justice does require inclusion. The goal of this paper is to problematize an often taken-for-granted assumption in Western democratic theory, which rarely asks: *inclusion in what?* As Indigenous theorists argue, justice requires expanding inclusions for Indigenous peoples within their own ethico-political communities through Indigenous resurgences. This is also not to suggest that settler and Indigenous communities constitute totally separable

or static domains. Rather, the aim here is to clarify what kinds of inclusions empower people's capacities for self-development and self-determination, and ultimately incentivize the kind of mutual reciprocity between *peoples* necessary for justice (*c.f.* Marin, 2017). The paper concludes by outlining some merits of comparative political theoretical approaches for decolonizing Western political thought and practice.

Inclusion and Justice

Following Young (2011), justice refers to the extent a society contains and supports the social and institutional conditions needed for realizing the values of self-development and democratic governance. Self-development refers to actors' abilities develop and exercise their personal and collective capacities and to express their experiences in institutionally-supported settings. Democratic governance refers to actors' abilities to make judgments and reach collective decisions; to participate in determining their actions and the conditions of their actions.

These two values map onto two conditions defining injustice: oppression and domination. *Oppression* refers to institutional constraints on self-development. Oppression "consists in systemic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit peoples' ability to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen" (Young, 2011, p. 38). *Domination* refers to institutional constraints on self-determination. Domination consists in processes that prevent social group members from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions. Domination occurs when actors determine the condition of other actors' actions without reciprocation, "either directly or by virtue of the structural consequences of their actions" (Young, 2011, p. 38).

There is a close relationship between inclusion and democracy: political systems are con-

sidered democratic to the extent that actors are included in the social and political practices that allow them to form judgments and influence collective decisions about issues that affect them (Warren, 2017). However, the relationship between political inclusion and both self-development and democratic governance is undermined when inclusion is conditional to participating in a normative framework that reconstitutes asymmetrical capacities for determining the conditions of actions or a normative framework that is harmful to actors' self- and collective identities.

In a very important sense, participating in any social or political practice is *always* conditional on a shared normative framework of background understandings. Mutual intelligibility occurs when speakers make utterances with the aim of being understood by (and trying to understand) their interlocutors (Wittgenstein, 1953; Grice, 1975; Habermas, 1984). That is, mutual intelligibility occurs when actors make utterances or conduct themselves in accordance with the rules of shared language games. Linguistic or symbolic capacities are constitutive of institutional reality (Searle, 2005). Furthermore, *language games*—defined as words, semantic associations, and norms (socially-expected standards or patterns of group behavior) comprising symbolic systems—become internalized as cognitive and motivating dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990, 2000, 2001). The internalization of social structure as cognitive dispositions, or *practical identities*,¹ grants actors a practical comprehension of the world into which they have been inserted.

Shared socio-structural conditions of existence ensure similarly situated actors develop very similar (or homologous) practical comprehensions of social space. Actors who are formed under similar conditions of existence and who participate in the same language games internalize similar dispositions; they develop similar practical identities. The experience of enjoying homologous practical identities and participating in shared language games constitutes a space of shared intelligibility, which we refer to as a shared life-way. We borrow this term from Little Bear (2005) who describes how Indigenous peoples were “organized into nations with group life-ways that resulted in philosophies, customs, values, beliefs and governance

systems arising from Native American paradigms.” The concept of a life-way—or shared backdrop of mutual intelligibility that gives rise to philosophies, customs, values, beliefs, and governance systems—has alternatively been referred to as a *form of life* (Wittgenstein, 1953), *common-sense world* (Bourdieu, 2000), and *lifeworld* (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973; Habermas, 1984, 1990, 1998).

A shared life-way ensures speech and action are readily comprehensible to participants. The harmonization between the objective world into which actors have been inserted and the practical selves that are developed help ensure there is a “stock of self-evidences shared by all, which, within the limits of a social universe, ensures a primordial consensus on the meaning of the world, a set of tacitly accepted commonplaces which make confrontation, dialogue, competition and even conflict possible” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 98). The ability for actors to internalize social structure as cognitive dispositions, embodying history as second nature, helps give permanence to a given life-way. Institutions of governance organizing practices give further permanence a life-way’s shared backdrop of mutual understandings, including understandings about power relations between social group members. Codifying the rules coordinating language games and norms into oral histories or laws and inscribing them into implicit patterns of perception and appreciation creates durable conditions for mutual intelligibility. Creating durable conditions for mutual intelligibility can be tremendously enabling and empowering, because it expands possibilities for easeful speech and action. The consecration of shared expectations into oral stories or written law (and resulting embodiment of social conditions) expands the scope of shared life-ways over geographical space and time. This enhances capacities for mutual comprehension and action coordination across generations, by helping to ensure an ancestor’s words and deeds will be intelligible to their descendants.

Of course, embedding shared intentions in language games, other institutions, and bodies can be tremendously *constraining*. In particular, when life-ways are shot through with inequalities, or asymmetrical empowerments, language games and other features of life-ways

are more likely to constrain the ability for the disempowered to express themselves and to determine their actions or the conditions of their actions. In this present work, *equalities* are understood relationally and structurally, as equalities of social standing, status, and authority between social group members. Following a relational understanding of structural equality, *inequality* refers to hierarchical social “relations between superior and inferior persons” (Anderson, 1999, p. 312, see also Bourdieu 1990, 2000).

Inequalities entail exclusions that prevent the disempowered from participating in or influencing practices that are important for self-development—the capacity to express oneself and one’s experiences—which contributes to harms of oppression. Inequalities and exclusions also block the ability to participate in practices that are important for collective determination—the capacity to determine one’s actions and the conditions of one’s actions—which contributes to domination. In Western democratic theory, analyses often focus on exclusions from the polity and in particular from state institutions. Particular attention has been paid to the way enshrining inequalities between social group members into law explicitly limits disempowered social group members’ capacity for self-expression and self-determination, which entails external exclusions from participating in political practices organized into state institutions.

For instance, limiting political participation rights to men entails external exclusions that prevent women from participating in or influencing political practices. The internalization of social structure in cognitive dispositions works in tandem to these formal processes, implicitly defining perceived possibilities for action. Bourdieu (2001, p. 39) describes how, even when formal exclusions that prevented French women from entering masculine spaces in France were removed, a “*socially imposed agoraphobia*” remained, leading “women to exclude themselves from the *agora*.” When actors’ internalized dispositions entail what Young (2000) calls *internal exclusions*, practical selves become “the accomplices of the processes that tend to make the probable a reality” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 65). In Bourdieu’s example, the practical identities that French women developed under conditions of state-sanctioned,

institutional-legal patriarchy remain even when laws formalizing the subordination of women were dismantled. French women living in conditions of formal equality who, through primary socialization, internalized practical identities similar to their mothers or grandmothers who lived under conditions of formal inequality, may also find themselves avoiding politics. The historical memory (*c.f.* Williams, 2000) of gender inequalities remain as tacit understandings of social space, helping to make the probable—masculine domination—a reality.

The problem that critical theorists such as Bourdieu and Young outline can be diagnosed in terms of the way that inequalities and exclusions prevent disempowered group members from participating in or influencing practices that contribute to self-development and self-determination. In these kinds of cases, the prescribed solution to the problem of exclusion is simply *more inclusion*. If efforts are made to empower the inclusion of, for instance, French women in the social and political practices necessary for changing France’s normative backdrop scaffolding speech and action—through consciousness-raising, voting, protesting, and deliberating—then the normative conditions of speech and action should become more reflective of French women’s needs and wants (reducing domination) and more conducive to French women’s ability to express themselves and develop their capacities in institutionally recognized settings (reducing oppression). Furthermore, the very acts of participating in political practices should be transformative for women, changing their subjectivities—the practical identities—to address the problem of internal exclusions. In other words, empowering French women’s inclusion in social and political practices, often organized into state institutions, reduces injustices.

However, there are instances where more inclusion is not the answer because “more inclusion” *reinforces* relations of oppression and domination. This is particularly clear in settler-colonial states, where settlers have worked to impose their vision of social space—the self-evidences of settlers’ life-ways—on Indigenous peoples through liberal colonization. Following Arneil (2012, p. 491), we define *colonization* as “the processes by which the imperial state takes over the land and/or sovereignty of another,” and *colonialism* as the ideological

framework that justifies colonialization. Liberal colonialism—which includes but is not limited to European settler-colonialism²—entails harmonizing colonized peoples’ dispositions and practices along three specific commitments. First, a commitment to private property and capitalism; second, to a universal understanding of industry and rationality (the understanding that “we can all be industrious and rational if educated properly”); and third, the stated³ rejection of forceful domination (Arneil, 2017, p. 30). Liberal colonialism “constitutes citizens and civil society in explicit opposition to the idle, irrational, custom-bound ‘Indian’ who may be transformed into a citizen but only if he/she gives up his/her ‘customs’ or ‘ways’ and instead becomes industrious and rational” (Arneil, 2012, p. 492).

Processes of *settler* colonization, including those motivated by the ideology of liberal colonialism, involve sending settlers to a territory and establishing political control over a territory and local Indigenous peoples, displacing and eliminating Indigenous peoples and Indigenous relations to self and land (Wolfe, 2006; Veracini, 2010). The Latin American modernity/coloniality (MC) literature focuses on the non-territorial aspects of coloniality, stressing the ways in which coloniality represents “a modern/colonial power matrix that exceeds and outlasts formal colonial rule over territory” (Singh, 2019, p. 341). While it is important to recognize coloniality as a process that seeks to “redefine culture, labor, intersubjective relations, aspirations of the self, common sense, and knowledge production in ways that accredit the superiority of the colonizer” (Mendoza, 2015, p. 114), Indigenous and settler colonial scholars (particularly those in Anglo settler-states) center land—and struggles over land—in their theories of decolonization (Singh, 2019).

Land is central to decolonization because land helps constitute the shared backdrop of mutual intelligibility that gives rise to Indigenous philosophies, customs, values, beliefs, and governance systems. Recall our earlier discussion about how participating in any social or political practice is *always* conditional on a shared normative framework of background understandings. Land and relations to land comprise part of the shared framework of background understandings that help constitute Indigenous mutual intelligibility (Coulthard,

2014; Simpson, 2011; Wildcat et al., 2014). Settler-colonial practices of displacing Indigenous peoples from land not only created space for the settlement of non-Indigenous peoples, it had the dual effect of inhibiting colonized peoples from internalizing distinctly *Indigenous* practical comprehensions of social space.⁴

In addition to displacing Indigenous peoples from their land, practices of liberal colonization have always involved using apparatuses of socialization to try and harmonize actors' experiences and induce colonized peoples to adopt settlers' vision of social space. These efforts have been central to settler colonialism partly because the ideology of liberal colonialism purports to reject the overt use of force (Arneil, 2017). Apparatuses of socialization helped colonizers feel they have solved the tension between their liberal colonial ideals and practice of settler colonization: the more Indigenous peoples internalize settler-colonial life-ways, the less necessary external force becomes. To clarify: forced assimilation *always* constitutes a symbolic violence. But this symbolic violence has been used to reduce the need for physical coercion, allowing colonizers to claim (and perhaps convince themselves) that they have solved the tension between their liberal colonial ideals and the practice of settler colonization.

Apparatuses of primary socialization—most importantly, families and educational institutions—help create the “primordial consensus on the meaning of the world, a set of tacitly accepted commonplaces which make confrontation, dialogue, competition and even conflict possible” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 98). In many settler colonies, efforts were made to prevent colonized peoples from learning indigenous languages and practices through family socialization. Efforts were also made to educate colonized peoples in settler educational institutions.⁵ Total institutions—institutions wherein where a group of people lead a formally administered life cut off from the wider community (Goffman, 2017)—are extreme examples of tools used to impose a settler backdrop of mutual intelligibility and to harmonize actors' dispositions and practices with settler life-ways. In Canada, a residential schooling system was used to separate Indigenous children from their families and integrate Indigenous children into settler life-ways. Indigenous children were induced to learn the dominant European language

and internalize norms related to the liberal values of hard work and industry, Christian gender norms, Western norms of “civility” and dress, and racial hierarchies. Furthermore, displacement and residential schooling *prevented* Indigenous children from participating in Indigenous land-based practices. As Wildcat et al. (2014) explain, “settler-colonialism has functioned, in part, by deploying institutions of western education to undermine Indigenous intellectual development through cultural assimilation and the violent separation of Indigenous peoples from our sources of knowledge and strength—the land.”

While residential schools did play a role in forceful domination (resulting in the death and abuse of Indigenous children), this was not the primary aim of these total institutions. Rather, the explicit aim of residential schools was to kill the Indian in the child. That is, residential schools were apparatuses of socialization designed to prepare Indigenous children for participation in settler language games and to harmonize Indigenous children’s internalized dispositions with settler life-ways—what Tully (2008, p. 118) describes as “a powerful form of assimilation called domestication or internal colonisation.”⁶ These total institutions aimed both to *destroy* existing understandings and to *create* new understandings. On the one hand, aiming to destroy Indigenous languages, belief systems, and relations to self, others, and to land through the attempted elimination (or at least denigration) of Indigenous life-ways. On the other hand, aiming (but often failing) to assimilate Indigenous children in a new language, faith, norms of social conduct, and implicit predispositions.

Residential schools are a striking example of the range of institutions and policies that were oriented to harmonizing Indigenous peoples dispositions and practices with settler life-ways; however, inclusion in more benign settler institutions and practices can also reinforce the oppression and domination of Indigenous peoples. Settler colonization “should not be seen as deriving its reproductive force solely from its strictly repressive or violent features, but rather from its ability to produce forms of life that make settler-colonialism’s constitutive hierarchies seem natural” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 152). Inscribing settler language games and norms into implicit patterns of perception and appreciation helps recreate durable conditions

for settler mutual intelligibility. Forcing colonized peoples to adopt settlers' life-ways can be tremendously empowering for settlers because it enables settlers' capacity for easeful speech and action. Settlers' capacity for speech and action is expanded because the constituency of actors who can participate in dialogue, competition, and conflict according to the logic of settler life-ways—including the logic racial classifications and hierarchies (Quijano, 2007; Quijano et al., 2008)—is expanded.

How Can “More Inclusion” Reconstitute Injustices?

Western democratic theories often point to exclusion as a driving cause of oppression and domination, and prescribe deepening inclusions as the solution. Following this logic, it might be tempting to conclude that enhancing the inclusion of Indigenous parents in settler political decision-making during periods of colonial expansion could have prevented the horrors of the residential school system. For instance, by empowering Indigenous parents' inclusion in settler elections as voters or candidates and empowering Indigenous voices in political speech. However, the procedures required for reaching mutual understanding and making collective decisions in settler-colonial states have required—and often continue to require—participating in practices that are *conditional* on settler life-ways. Increasing the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in norm-conditional settler practices⁷ can both limit the ability for Indigenous peoples to determine their actions and the conditions of their actions, and inhibit the ability for Indigenous peoples to express themselves and be understood.

We first consider the example of North American enfranchisement laws, which offer an extreme example of norm-conditional inclusion, before turning our attention to subtler, contemporary examples of norm-conditional inclusion. Enfranchisement laws in North American Anglo settler-states required that Indigenous peoples formally forsake their Indigenous title before they could legally vote or run for office. Until 1925 in the United States and 1960 in Canada, the formal procedures of democratic policy-making—voting and running for office—

were privileges gained at the explicit loss of Indigenous title. Laws requiring Indigenous peoples renounce their title in exchange for political rights are an obvious example of how an application of the principle of inclusion—inclusion in norm-conditional practices—reinforces (rather than solves) injustices. The example of enfranchisement laws makes it very clear that the problem is with the appearance of inclusionary drives that promote asymmetrical capacities for self-development and self-determination.

However, as Indigenous scholars have noted, inclusion in more benign settler institutions and practices can also reinforce the oppression and domination of Indigenous peoples. In this section, we review three more contemporary, subtler examples where particular applications of inclusion in democratic states have reinforced harms of injustice. First, participating in formal legal procedures (Alfred, 1995); second, engaging in practices of reconciliation (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011); and third, participating in deliberation (Coulthard, 2010). These examples help illustrate how—without critical engagement with the question of “inclusion in *what?*”—deepening inclusions in the official practices and procedures required for collective decision-making in settler-states can reinforce harms of oppression and domination.

With respect to participating in formal legal procedures, consider the example of when the Kahnawake band council launched legal action to try and block the Quebec government from constructing the St. Lawrence Seaway through Kahnawake settlements (Alfred, 1995). The band council was confident that the courts would uphold the rule of law, including treaty law. However, even restricting their actions and arguments to those that should make sense according to the rules and logic of settler institutions—constraining the ability for the Kanien’kehá:ka to express themselves—asymmetrical empowerments limited the ability of the Kanien’kehá:ka to determine their actions or the conditions of their action. As Kanien’kehá:ka philosopher Alfred (1995, p. 64-5) explains:

Officially committed to working within the framework of the federal structure, the band council was soon disillusioned by the callous disregard displayed in the eventual full expropriation by Order in Council (PC. 1955-1416) and the forced

relocation of homes in Kahnawake. There was a growing sense among Kahnawake Mohawks that the rules of the game were skewed against them; even with treaties in hand and armed with rational legal arguments, the community was ignored by the federal government and their village was overrun and destroyed by bulldozers and earth-movers.

In Canada, different levels of government, academic institutions, and civil society organizations are engaging in reconciliation, of efforts to create new relations between settler and Indigenous peoples by “engaging Canadians in dialogue and transformative experiences that revitalize the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians” (Reconciliation Canada, 2019). Saagiig Nishnaabeg philosopher, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, describes the problem with practices of reconciliation that occur according the logics of settler life-ways and within the framework of settler state institutions. Expressing the problem of how norm-conditional participation reinforces harms of oppression and domination, Simpson (2011, p. 52) notes that “our participation will benefit the state in an asymmetrical fashion, by attempting to neutralize the legitimacy of Indigenous resistance.” Building on these ideas, Dene philosopher Glen Coulthard (2014, p. 3) carefully outlines how “the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.”⁸

Norm-conditional practices are not limited to those organized into formal, state institutions. Participating in discursive practices in civil society *outside* of formal state institutions also requires participating in settler life-ways. Settlers have typically not been willing to reciprocally participate in Indigenous language games. This means that the onus of making oneself understood and trying to understand settlers has fallen on the shoulders of Indigenous peoples. Participating in the language games required for reaching mutual understanding have required that Indigenous peoples learn to speak settler language(s).

Furthermore, participating in language games requires not only learning new signifiers

(words) and grammatical rules, it also requires participating in discursive procedures—for instance, deliberative reason-giving—to produce collective outcomes deemed acceptable by the standards of settler life-ways. Coulthard (2010) strongly condemns the deliberative procedural requirement of openness to cultural critique. In particular, Coulthard (2010, p. 130-1) critiques Seyla Benhabib’s (2002) commitment to procedures of democratic decision-making—deliberative procedures that treat “justice for Indigenous communities in terms of their greater inclusion in the institutional matrix of the larger settler society”—precisely because they are conditional on participating in (and re-constituting) settler life-ways, which entails harms of cultural imperialism. Coulthard (2010, p. 130-1) argues that:

“[Benhabib’s] whole approach appears to suggest that this inclusion is necessary so that Indigenous peoples’ non-liberal, non-modern cultural norms and practices remain open to contestation and group deliberation. Indigenous peoples, in other words, require access to the deliberative mechanisms and democratic institutions of the colonial society for the well-being of their own citizens.”

Participating in settlers’ norm-conditional practices is not just a problem because the rules of the game entail asymmetrical empowerments. Participating in settler life-ways are also problematic because they often entail eliminating (or at least denigrating) *Indigenous* life-ways. Benhabib’s suggestion—to subject Indigenous peoples’ norms and practices to settler procedures for reaching understandings and making decisions—acknowledges and encourages the use of settler procedures to *alter* (or, according to the logic of liberal colonialism, “develop” or “improve”) Indigenous life-ways. Tully (2008, p. 116) also describes how “relations of inclusion and assimilation” can contribute to oppression and domination, describing how people

Are permitted and often encouraged to participate in democratic practices of deliberation yet are constrained to deliberate in a particular way, in a particular type of institution and over a particular range of issues. Their agreements and

disagreements therefore serve to reinforce rather than challenge the status quo. Through participation in these assimilative practices, they gradually come to relinquish their dissonant customs and ways and acquire the consonant forms of subjectivity.

When Indigenous peoples participate in settler language games and governance institutions *instead of* Indigenous language games and Indigenous governance institutions, Indigenous actors help expand settlers' backdrop of shared intentionality over geographical space and time. Simpson (2011, p. 52) describes this as *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi*, "the process and description of living as a colonized of assimilated person... when a person tries to live his or her life as a non-Native at the expense of being Nishnabeg."⁹ *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi* prevents Indigenous peoples who are trying to live as settlers from engaging in mutual comprehension and action coordination across generations with their own peoples. It prevents Indigenous ancestors' words and deeds from being intelligible to descendants who are trying to live as settlers. Alfred (2015, p. 6) describes the intergenerational process of replacing Indigenous life-ways with settler life-ways with a metaphor of standing on a smaller and smaller rock, asking the reader to envision Alfred's Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) ancestor:

"Think about that person and how he related to other human beings in his natural and social environment: speaking his language, seeing the world through stories and ceremonies and culture in a way that was entirely unique and distinctly Mohawk. He had values in the way that he conducted himself. He lived in a community in which people related to each other in particular ways. The rock he was standing on was huge. Now fast forward to the current holder of the name Taiaiake. How big is the rock that I am standing on compared to the rock that my ancestor was standing on?"

Liberal colonization also risks marginalization, a harm of oppression where "a whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life" (Young, 2011, p. 53).

Processes of colonization produce marginalization on three levels. First, as Alfred’s metaphor of the smaller and smaller rock illustrates, even Indigenous actors who resist participating in settler life-ways face the threat of social exclusion as their spaces of shared Indigenous intentionality become smaller and smaller. Second, Indigenous actors who resist participating in settler life-ways are marginalized by settler societies. Liberal colonial logics try to define Indigenous peoples who resist inclusion in settler practices as “idle, irrational, custom-bound ‘Indian[s]’” (Arneil, 2012, p. 492), and—marking them as people the settler system of labour will not use—often subject them to “severe material deprivation and even extermination” (Young, 2011, p. 53).

Third, even Indigenous peoples who participate in settler life-ways risk marginalization. Wolfe (2006, p. 397) describes the process of gaining the settler world at the expense of losing “your Indigenous soul” as “assimilation’s Faustian bargain.” As Little Bear (2005, p. 11) explains, “the hope on the part of the European colonizers that their way of life if going to be ‘gobbled up’ by North American Indians never came to be.” Instead, attempted assimilation resulted in “cultural blanks”; actors “with no cultural code or set of norms” to guide their behaviour (Little Bear, 2005, p. 11). Rather than “successfully” making settlers out of Indigenous peoples, attempted assimilation often produces anomie; assimilation means Indigenous actors who are deprived of the opportunity to participate in Indigenous life-ways often experience marginalization from *any* life-way. In an interview, Didit artist Art Tsaqwuasupp Thompson explains how:

I had two languages, my father’s, Ditidaht, and my mother’s, Coast Salish, *Cowichan*. I didn’t fit into white society because I spoke these two languages. And then I was rejected at home because these languages were beaten out of me in the residential school... We didn’t fit in with our own people and we didn’t fit in the outside society” (cited in Alfred, 2005).

It should be clear now that the purpose of this theoretical intervention is *not* to denounce the importance of inclusion per se. Rather, the goal of this work is to highlight the

problem with prescribing inclusion without critically asking: inclusion in *what*? Many Frankfurt school thinkers—including Benhabib, Habermas, Honneth, McCarthy, and others—have made ideas of historical progress and development (the modernization of Western life-ways) central to their normative claims (see Allen, 2016; Tully, 2008; Escobar, 2004, for critiques). For theorists who place the modernization of Western life-ways at the heart of their normative claims, justice requires deepening inclusions in Western life-way procedures and practices that would ultimately harmonize Indigenous actors’ patterns of perception and appreciation with the modern, rationalized scaffoldings of Western mutual intelligibility. For instance, by subjecting features of Indigenous life-ways to rational deliberation. Our analysis clarifies how participating in settler social and political practices that are conditional on settler life-ways can in fact entail harms of oppression and domination.

Thus far, our analysis appears to leave us with an apparent paradox. It seems that not only does norm-conditional inclusion in settler practices entail harms of oppression and domination, but Indigenous abstention from settler social and political practices can also entail injustices. The goal of this work is to show that this paradox—that both participation and non-participation in norm-conditional practices can reinforce harms of oppression and domination—stems from asking the wrong question. The question is not simply about *how much* inclusion, but rather: inclusion in *what*? As Simpson (2011, p. 24, emphasis added) explains, the way for Indigenous peoples “to not be co-opted is to use *our own legal and political processes to bring about justice*.”

Inclusion in What?

Regenerating Indigenous Life-Ways Through Resurgences

Indigenous peoples theorize and practice Indigenous resurgences, which refers to regenerating Indigenous life-ways through “self-conscious traditionalism” (Alfred, 1999, 2005). As (Simpson, 2011, pp. 17–8) explains, Indigenous resurgences require:

Significantly reinvesting in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal systems; language learning; ceremonial and spiritual pursuits; creating and using our artistic and performance-based traditions... to reclaim the very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in the dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context in which they were originally generated.

Indigenous languages and stories play a central role in resurgences: “storytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a just reality” (Simpson, 2011, p. 33). Participating in Indigenous language games—speaking Indigenous languages and participating in shared practices such as storytelling—is essential for developing Indigenous practical identities, for embodying histories as second nature. This is tremendously enabling and empowering because it preserves and re-expands durable conditions for mutual intelligibility. To borrow Alfred’s (2015) metaphor, participating in Indigenous languages games expands the common “rock” that a given Indigenous people are standing on. As Simpson (2011, p. 61) explains: “Listening to the sound of our voice means that we need to listen with our full bodies—our hearts, our minds, and our physicality.” Indigenous resurgences are not new. As Simpson (2017) explains, “It is not happenstance or luck that Indigenous peoples and our lands still exist after centuries of attack. This is our strategic brilliance. Our presence is our weapon, and this is visible to me... every time we embody Indigenous life.” Indigenous life-ways have been preserved by Elders who are fluent language speakers and who have “‘protected’ their interpretations by embodying them and living them in Nishnaabeg¹⁰ contexts” (Simpson, 2011, p. 19).

Embodying Indigenous life-ways in *context* is central to resurgences. As Altamirano-Jiménez (2013, p. 4) explains, this is because “Indigenous peoples construct their identities based on meanings and social practices situated in place.” A Naskapi elder (cited in Lévesque et al., 2016, p. 75) discusses how connecting youth to Naskapi life-ways entails connections to place:

Young people have to know about nature so that they can find means of survival. It would be very useful for the community to pass the knowledge to the young. There needs to be a way to show our traditions to the youth; they need to see it. It is important to preserve the Naskapi culture. Our knowledge is the product of our observation of the environment during thousands of years and of these observations, influenced by our beliefs, values and customs.

Indigenous land-based pedagogies are central to Indigenous resurgences. According to Wildcat et al. (2014), “land-based education sustains and grows Indigenous governance, ethics and philosophy—and life.”

Resurgences are both rooted in history and forward-looking, representing “a self-reflective program of culturally grounded desubjectification” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 155). Resurgence “draws critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 156). As Alfred (2005, p. 34) explains: “Regeneration means we will reference ourselves differently, both from the ways we did traditionally and under colonial domination. We will self-consciously recreate our cultural practices and reform our political identities by drawing on tradition in a thoughtful process of reconstruction and a committed reorganization of our lives in a personal and collective sense.”

Conclusion

Deepening the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in practices that are conditional on (and help reconstitute) settler life-ways—playing language games, attending public schools, and participating in settler’ political institutions—can reinforce harms of oppressions and domination. Increasing Indigenous peoples’ inclusion in settler-colonial social and political practices also constitutes injustices because participation in settler life-ways often simultaneously prevents Indigenous peoples from re-constituting Indigenous life-ways. Shrinking spaces of shared

Indigenous intentionalities increases the risk of marginalization.

Indigenous resurgences offer lessons for decolonizing Western theory and practice in at least three, interrelated ways. First, practitioners of Indigenous resurgence offer lessons for Western political thought through the very *practice* of engaging in resurgences. Here, the comparative theoretical lens must take seriously the call to go beyond the written word and attend to extratextual “oral traditions, extratextual practices of study, and pedagogical customs” (Jenco, 2007). Indigenous resurgences are enactive political practices and, as Rollo (2018, p. 12) explains, “enactive political practices are not simply backgrounds from which meaning must be extracted; they are also dynamic sites of meaning production and contestation.” The Indigenous concept of resurgences does not begin from “an idealised exchange of public reasons among free and equal citizens in the traditionally conceived institutions of constitutional democracy, or a projection of these to a utopian cosmopolis” (Tully, 2008, p. 120). These philosophies are created through practice. In this sense, Indigenous resurgences represent practical, grounded normative theories. Grounded normative theories involve practices of political contestation that center the voices of those who are disempowered in social hierarchies. These practices help promote the comprehensiveness of political theory more generally by attending to a range of relevant positions and ways of knowing, and improve the rigour of normative theory by interrogating the unquestioned authority of Western political thought. In this sense, grounded normative theories, and notably Indigenous resurgences, constitute “alternative methodologies of knowledge production from which political theory might gain” (Williams and Warren, 2014, p. 9).

Relatedly, practices of Indigenous resurgence—the self-conscious recreation of cultural practices and political identities—help illustrate the possibility of social change. Critical theorists such as Bourdieu help clarify how social orders are faithfully reproduced intergenerationally: people internalize structural conditions as practical identities, and unconsciously make the probable a reality through their everyday unthinking habits and practices. However, Bourdieu has been criticized for failing to account for social change (e.g., Jenkins, 1982).

As practitioners/theorists of resurgences demonstrate, it is possible to enact social change through a “self-reflective program of culturally grounded desubjectification” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 155). Practitioners and theorists of Indigenous resurgences are recreating spaces of shared intentionality actively recreating cultural practices and political identities (*c.f.* Alfred, 2005, p. 34). Simpson (2011, p. 134-5) describes having to act in ways that she never experienced growing up so that her children can experience Indigenous life-ways. Years later, (Simpson, 2017, p. 1) describes how her children have:

Grown up in their territory, learning with a community of artists, makers, and elders, a luxury that not all of us, including myself, have had. Because of that, I see a strength in them that I don’t see in myself... They know more about what it means to be Nishnaabeg in their first decades than I did in my third. This intimate resurgence in my family makes me happy.

This is an example of how participating in the language games and practices one wants the next generation to embody can promote justice. However, the onus for social change cannot only fall solely on the shoulders of the colonized or disempowered. Westerners must also enact behaviors they have never seen modelled, so future generations will not internalize the unthinking patterns of thought and appreciation, or participate in the kinds of practices that reinforce social hierarchies and contribute to injustice.

Third, Indigenous resurgences offer lessons for Western theorists who are uncomfortable with making ideas of historical progress and Western development (the modernization of Western life-ways) central to their normative claims. Indigenous resurgences entail participating in Indigenous life-worlds that are developed through interaction and are alive and dynamic, albeit always rooted in specific histories that can conscientiously be practiced in ways that promote more just collective outcomes. These insights from Indigenous philosophy illustrate that abandoning “the backward-looking story that positions European modernity as the outcome of a historical learning process” does not require abandoning the “the forward-looking conception of the possibility of achieving a more just or less oppressive social world”

(Allen, 2016, p. 226). As Rollo (2018, p. 15) notes, the “affirmation of the world of political meaning that exists beyond texts and words”—including the affirmation of a more just world that is brought into being through practices of self-conscious desubjectification—“should be understood not as a new limitation but, rather, as a new contribution to a future marked by an increasingly shared political life, a global future.”

Notes

¹What Pierre Bourdieu calls *habitus*.

²Liberal colonialism also includes the creation of *internal* or *domestic* colonies to “improve” certain social groups (including the mentally ill). These refer to colonies within state borders that are oriented to the moral improvement of certain social group members through agrarian labour (Arneil, 2018, 2017, 2012).

³Arneil is absolutely correct in acknowledging Locke’s stated rejection of the notion that “might makes right,” but liberal colonization certainly involved forceful domination. Still, it is important to note that the ideology of liberal colonialism explicitly rejects the use of force because it points to the more central role that apparatuses of socialization—and more insidious means of internalized domination—have played in liberal colonization.

⁴In the sense of making it harder to participate in shared Indigenous life-ways, *not* in the sense of permanently ending the ability to participate in Indigenous life-ways. We return to this point in the subsequent section.

⁵Of course, colonized peoples has never been passive *tabula rasa* upon which colonizers could inscribe their life-ways and have always participated in practices of resistance. We return to the question of Indigenous resistance through resurgence as well as the reciprocal influence of Indigenous peoples on settlers in the subsequent sections.

⁶Again, for clarity: the fact that these institutions were not designed to kill children, but to kill the Indian in the child, does not make them acceptable. Harmonizing Indigenous children’s internalized dispositions with settler life-ways is a symbolic violence and an injustice.

⁷Dhamoon (2013) develops a similar and very useful concept of *regulated inclusion* to describe the way empowered group members may make space to include disempowered group members’ practices, but on highly regulated terms determined by members of the empowered group. We use norm-conditional inclusion rather than regulated inclusion because we are mostly focusing on instances where inclusion requires participating in the empowered social group’s normative backdrop of shared understandings. That is to say, a more complete assimilation is required (rather the cases where cultural differences are included, but highly regulated—a similar but distinct injustice).

⁸The idea that Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) follows a Western liberal form and reconstitutes state power is contested even among decolonial scholars. For instance, Ibhawoh (2016, p. 5) describes how South Africa’s TRC drew on *Ubuntu*, an “indigenous expression of collective humanism and an affirmation of the principle of human dignity.” Ibhawoh applauds the Canadian government for looking to South Africa as a model for reconciliation and sees the Canadian government’s decision to look to the

global south for solutions to injustice as a step forward toward decolonization.

⁹Simpson writes from a Nishnabeg perspective and zhaaganashiiyaadizi is a concept in Nishnaabemowin.

¹⁰A note to non-Indigenous readers: Nishnaabeg is not synonymous for “Indigenous,” but rather refers to a group of culturally related Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island (North America). Simpson is Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg and writes from a Nishnaabeg perspective.

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