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RESEARCH ARTICLE/ÉTUDE ORIGINALE

Gender-Based Violence Research in Canadian Political Science: A Call to Action

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Abstract

Gender-based violence is a prevalent and persistent societal problem in Canada that permeates all spaces, including politics. Yet sexual harassment, sexual assault and/or gender-based violence research is rarely found in mainstream political science in Canada or elsewhere. This article argues that this absence is highly problematic for a discipline that purports to centre itself on understanding power—who has it and who doesn't, and how to access it. It further argues for a normative intersectional and interdisciplinary approach, highlighting promising avenues of research in feminist institutionalism and Indigenous feminism to help achieve elusive solutions to gender-based violence in the future.

Résumé

La violence sexiste est un problème sociétal répandu et persistant au Canada qui imprègne tous les espaces, y compris la politique. Pourtant, la recherche sur le harcèlement sexuel, l'agression sexuelle et/ou la violence sexiste est rarement présente dans le courant dominant de la science politique au Canada ou ailleurs. Cet article soutient que cette absence est très problématique pour une discipline qui prétend se concentrer sur la compréhension du pouvoir–qui le détient et qui ne le détient pas, et comment y accéder. Il plaide en outre en faveur d'une approche normative, intersectionnelle et interdisciplinaire, qui met en lumière des pistes de recherche prometteuses dans l'institutionnalisme féministe et le féminisme autochtone pour aider à trouver des solutions insaisissables à la violence fondée sur le genre à l'avenir.

Keywords: gender-based violence; Canadian politics; feminist institutionalism; Indigenous feminism

Mots-clés: violence sexiste; politique canadienne; institutionnalisme féministe; féminisme autochtone

Introduction

It is my pleasure to share this presidential address with you today, and I very much appreciate the opportunity to have this privilege and space to speak to you as the

outgoing president of the Canadian Political Science Association. In my talk titled "Gender-Based Violence Research in Canadian Political Science: A Call to Action," I am striving to accomplish three goals that Barbara Arneil also used to frame her presidential address in 2020, including: "a combination of current research," an "autobiographic career retrospective" and, "if possible, [some] larger insights into the discipline of political science and/or the Canadian polity" (Arneil, 2020: 735).

I also have drawn strong inspiration for my address today from several of my feminist political science colleagues that I would characterize as being on the vanguard of exciting and impactful research agendas in our discipline. These agendas push the boundaries of what political science means and makes room for advocacy. In particular, I'd like to give a nod to the organizers of an honest and forward-thinking panel at last year's annual conference. The session was titled "Feministing Political Science: A Manifesta for Change," and if you missed it, don't worry, the participants have a book coming out in 2023 from the University of Alberta Press that I anticipate will be a must-read. Panellists last year, including Ethel Tungohan, Alana Cattapan, Nisha Nath, Fiona MacDonald, Stephanie Paterson and Tammy Findlay, challenged us to make space for those who dare to "un-do" political science, to challenge traditional notions of "expertise" and "teach disciplinarity at the same time as teaching resistance to the discipline." I believe the strength of political science lies in work that is rooted in interdisciplinary approaches, and my call to action surrounding the study of gender-based violence in Canadian political science asks researchers to both embrace the discipline and also to challenge its limitations from both an interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective. I hope that my address today helps to further open space for feministing political science, even as the discipline remains—as Jill Vickers has noted—largely resistant to these approaches (Vickers, 2015).

I focus today on one core area of that feministing—the topic of gender-based violence and anti-violence against women. Gender-based violence research is research that I am immensely passionate about and have been drawn to throughout my career. Gender-based violence is a problem that permeates almost every aspect of Canadian life—from the workplace, to the home, to the streets, to online platforms, to academic conferences. It is about power and the abuse of power by those that wield it against others that have limited or little to no ability or avenues to exercise their own power. It is used to silence, delegitimize and contain those who dare to seek equity and inclusion in spaces they have citizenship, democratic and human rights to occupy but in many cases are either absent or in a minority. Yet it is rarely a core topic of political science inquiry in this country or elsewhere, even though our discipline purports to study power—those who have access to it and those that do not.

I would like to begin the story of why I study gender-based violence and why more of us should turn our attention to this persistent and devastating problem by defining what gender-based violence is and by providing some recent examples of how it manifests itself in intersectional ways with dire impacts on Canadian society. I will then turn attention to gender-based violence research to locate it inside of our discipline and to make a case for increased attention to it utilizing political science lenses. Next, I highlight two theoretical areas that hold much promise in challenging heteronormative, androcentric, white power structures and norms that have prevented effective policy change that could address the problem of gender-based

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violence in this country as well as in others; these include feminist institutionalist and Indigenous feminist approaches. In so doing, I hope to draw specific attention to what Canadian political science can do to more purposefully and effectively address the persistent and wicked problem of gender-based violence. I conclude with a call to action for all of us to follow a normative approach to political science that leads to positive change toward true equity in society—something many of us already do with aplomb. It has personally taken me years to be comfortable with this approach that more fully embraces my innate feminism but, in many ways, eschews my political science training to be a "neutral" observer. Thus, my call to action is to follow the inspiring words of Rita Dhamoon, who encourages us all to "do the work that feeds you and your community."[1]

Defining Gender-Based Violence

I purposefully have chosen to address the phenomenon of gender-based violence, which includes the study of violence against women but also explores violence across the gender spectrum between masculinity and femininity, including gender-non-binary and transgender identities. A focus on gender, instead of just women, "encompasses the gendered ideas about masculinity and femininity that place hegemonic men not just above women, but also above non-hegemonic men and non-heteronormative individuals" (Bardall et al., 2020: 918). The study of gender-based violence is also necessarily intersectional, as violence impacts people in distinct ways based on their multiple and interlocking identities. Racialized, dis/abled, poor, religious minorities and Indigenous gender minorities are by far the most frequent targets of some of the most debilitating forms of violence in almost every setting. Yet despite this, policies aimed at ending gender-based violence rarely include attention to its intersectional impacts.

Researchers intentionally define violence broadly along a continuum that manifests itself in many forms including, but not limited to, murder, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, coercive control, verbal violence, psychological violence, economic violence, emotional violence, and/or environmental violence. Violence "can encompass neglect, abuse, harassment, microaggressions, erasure and exploitation" (Bruckert and Law, 2018: 11). Violence along this continuum has devastating impacts on its targets, wherever it is located on the continuum itself—from silencing and oft-experienced microaggressions, to verbal and/or nonverbal harassment online or offline, to unwanted sexual touching, to "everyday" exhausting sexism. In women's shelters and transition homes, service providers use the Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs in Duluth, Minnesota, to help women understand gender-based violence. The wheel includes a wide array of examples of intimate partner violence which are delineated around several spokes, with the centre or hub of the wheel anchoring each spoke to the words "power and control" (Coercive Control Collective, 2018). Power and control are what gendered violence is all about—in all of its forms. You cannot understand it, nor can you eradicate it, without addressing structural inequalities in society.

It is commonplace to see gender-based violence routinely reported in the Canadian media, although cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) will often not

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be judged newsworthy unless it involves femicide or is particularly heinous or does not involve racialized victims or survivors. If we take a snapshot of top media stories from April of this year, it is quite easy to find reports of gender-based violence. Some examples that appeared last month include reports of the atrocities of wartime rape of women and children in Ukraine perpetrated by Russian soldiers that made headlines in Canada in late April after foreign affairs minister Mélanie Joly brought attention to the issue in a series of interviews and tweets (Paas-Lang, 2022). Another involves the mayor of Woodstock, Ontario, who was recently charged with five counts of sexual assault involving two separate women that reportedly occurred between August 2017 and April 5 of this year (he was put on a paid leave of absence while police continued their investigation) (Trevithick, 2022). A third tells the story of Shantelle Murphy and her two children who were found murdered in their Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, home when police discovered them after responding to a fire on April 10 (her partner and the father to the two children has since been charged) (Cram, 2022). A fourth covers an April 18 story where the RCMP announced that they were reopening 242 sexual assault investigations after reviewing more than 30,000 that occurred between 2015 and 2017 but were deemed to be "unfounded"—this following the *Globe and Mail*'s blistering report into how police routinely disregard sexual assault allegations across the country (Tunney, 2022). The list goes on and on and on, and similar stories repeat themselves in the media every month.

Perhaps not surprisingly, statistics on incidents of all forms of gender-based violence have also not improved in Canada in decades—and, in some cases, instead of improvements, we see things getting steadily worse. One woman is killed by her intimate partner approximately every six days in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021). In the first six months of 2021, 92 women and girls were killed in Canada (14 more than during the same period in 2020 and 32 more than the same period in 2019) (Miller, 2021). Twelve per cent of femicide victims were Indigenous, more than double their percentage in the Canadian population. Seventy-nine per cent of the over 100,000 (known) people over aged 15 who experienced intimate partner violence were women, according to police-reported data—and we know that much less is reported than actually takes place (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022). According to self-reported data (in 2018), 44 per cent of women who have ever been in an intimate partner relationship (approximately 6.2 million women aged 15 years or older) reported some form of "psychological, physical, or sexual abuse in the context of an intimate relationship in their lifetime" (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022). Sixty-one per cent of Indigenous women and 67 per cent of LGBTQ2S+ women in Canada reported experiencing IPV in their lifetime—one in five LGBTQ2S+ women experienced some form of IPV in the past year (almost double the reporting from heterosexual women). Fifty-five per cent of women with disabilities reported experiencing some form of IPV in their lifetime. While reports of IPV have indicated incidents have likely increased during the pandemic (according to numbers of women who have tried to access shelters and transition homes), Statistics Canada has not collected gender-based IPV data since 2019, so we don't have accurate data that confirms this yet (Hayes et al., 2022).

Reporting rates for sexual assault and sexual touching are low in Canada. Rates increased slightly in the 1980s but levelled off in the 1990s and have been on a steep

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decline ever since (Craig, 2021: 102). Fewer than 10 per cent of sexual assault survivors will report offences to the police. Despite improvements to directives to police and to gender-based violence laws themselves, conviction rates have not improved in over three decades. And police are investigating less of these reports over time (Craig, 2021: 102).

The Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children, the University of Toronto and the Canadian Labour Congress conducted the country's first national survey on harassment and violence in the workplace in the spring of this year—another area of gender-based violence plagued by low reporting rates. Almost 5,000 people from a variety of workspaces, including health care, social assistance and public administration, participated in the survey conducted between October 2020 and April 2021. Seventy-one per cent of those surveyed experienced at least one form of harassment and violence or sexual harassment and violence in the two years prior to the survey, with gender-diverse individuals being the most likely to report experiences of all forms of harassment and violence (Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, 2022).

In the political sphere, reports of gender-based violence in political spaces were widespread across the country at all levels of government. A 2018 Canadian Press survey of political staff of cabinet ministers, MPs and senators found that 29 per cent had experienced sexual harassment and 9 per cent had been sexually assaulted. Of those experiencing sexual harassment, the vast majority (78 per cent) did not report it for a variety of reasons, including concern that reporting would negatively impact their careers. Examples of recent male politicians who have been identified as committing some form of gender-based violence include Brampton mayor and former Conservative Party of Canada leadership candidate Patrick Brown (who was deemed "cleared" by some because the advances he made to one former staffer happened when she was 19 instead of being reportedly under-age) and disgraced former senator Don Meredith (who used his position of power to have sex with a minor on numerous occasions). Just before I taped this address today, I read a CBC account of the "everyday" violence on the campaign trail being inflicted on racialized, women-identified candidates for the current Ontario provincial election, including racist and hateful defacing of campaign signs as well as verbal hate-filled insults at campaign stops and at door-to-door canvassing in neighbourhoods (Watters, 2022).

Gender-based violence is also present within the political science discipline itself. The Women's Caucus of the American Political Science Association organized a short course at their 2018 annual conference under the title #MeTooPoliSci (following from the #MeToo movement that drew international attention to sexual harassment and assault after the 2007 campaign from black feminist activist Tarana Burke and then a decade later when actress Alyssa Milano—and countless others—brought attention to sexual harassment in the entertainment industry as well as in other workplaces around the world). #MeTooPoliSci established a research team which was awarded a $1 million NSF grant "to address the problem of sexual harassment in the academic discipline of political science" (#MeTooPoliSci ADVANCE, 2022). While a similar movement hasn't yet taken hold in the Canadian political science discipline, attention to harassment, sexual harassment, sexism and racism has been raised at a series of CPSA pre-conference

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workshop sessions on gender and political science at the University of British Columbia in 2019, and these themes were also raised during several panels at last year's annual online conference.

Gender-Based Violence Research in the Discipline

As part of the #MeTooPoliSci research project, Nadia E. Brown, the then immediate past president of APSA's Women's Caucus for Political Science, assembled a group of researchers to deliver a 2019 special issue of the *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* on the topic of "Me Too Political Science" (Brown, 2019). The fact that this special issue was in a more specialized gender-based journal, instead of a more mainstream, generalist political science journal, was not surprising, as most attention to gender-based violence has tended to be interdisciplinary, with little intersection to the mainstream discipline of political science. Gender-based violence research is often found in women's and gender studies, sociology, social work, psychology and law but rarely in political science. Patricia Strach conducted a 2019 study of the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, the *American Political Science Review*, to see how often articles published in the *APSR* used words associated with some common forms of gender-based violence, including "sexual assault," "sexual harassment" or "sexual misconduct." Out of 25,369 potential articles in the *APSR*, only 39 used these words and fewer still (14) used the exact phrases—this represents essentially 0 per cent (0.15 per cent, to be exact) of articles in the *APSR*. Strach then decided to look for some more random, or what she called "ridiculous," words to search as a comparator and landed on the words "dogs," "cats" and "chickens" as a first grouping and then "beer," "soda" and "chips" as the second grouping. She found 96 articles in the *APSR* used the words "dogs," "cats" or "chickens" and 185 used the words "beer," "soda" or "chips." This worked out to 0.38 per cent and 0.73 per cent, accordingly. She didn't conclude that sexual harassment was less important than dogs or chips, but she did conclude that "all of these things matter very little to the discipline. Even in this sorry group, in which none of the searches accounted for even 1 per cent of total articles, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct finish last" (Strach, 2019: 13).

While I didn't replicate Strach's study for our flagship journal, I did review the titles and abstracts of all articles published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* to see if any of the following terms were included in any titles, abstracts or keywords over the course of its publishing history: in particular, I looked for the terms "gender-based violence," "violence against women," "domestic violence," "family violence," "sexual assault," "sexual harassment," "battered women," "intimate partner violence" and/or "#MeToo" or just "MeToo." Since 1968, the word "violence" appears in either the title of an article or in an abstract or keyword search a total of 11 times. Out of the 11 articles, two address Indigenous violence (including sexual assault of children in residential schools) and three address gender-based violence or sexual harassment (and I am an author or co-author of two of these). While the *CJPS* has not published as many articles as the *APSR*—only 2,207 articles over its history to date—these five articles make up a lower percentage than Strach's study of similar words in articles in the *APSR*, at 0.002 per cent. Again, though, essentially 0 per cent.

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Many of you may be asking, So what? You may also be wondering why I have been talking so long about such a "periphery" topic for our discipline. But my argument here is that this topic isn't peripheral at all. And Strach agrees. Gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault are all about power, and the study of power is supposed to be what we do at the core of political science. According to Strach:

> As political scientists [power] should be at the heart of what we study, but it isn't. Our discipline creates artificial (and somewhat arbitrary) boundaries about which studies of politics count as meaningful research and which do not. We discourage research that explores more expansive notions of how politics is practiced in broader society. As a result, we have narrow boundaries about what constitutes "good political science." We privilege the formal actors and the formal actions that they take over the ways in which politics actually happens. . . . I argue here that political scientists ought to embrace an expansive definition of politics to address the real questions of power, its abuse in our society and in our profession. (2019: 8)

It would be easy to say that things are different here in Canada than in the United States, but clearly they are not. And like Strach, I think we have a duty to take on this research, because to ignore it is to do a disservice to society and would be turning a blind eye to core questions about power and inequality. The study of gender-based violence is not a niche topic; it is about the abuse of power, and it is inherently political.

Researching Gender-Based Violence

Like their counterparts in the US, some well-known feminist Canadian political scientists have raised important questions and gathered useful data on gender-based violence. Similarly, this research is often published in alternative venues, is interdisciplinary and, like much feminist political science (FPS), is not well known by generalists in the mainstream of the discipline (Vickers, 2015). Caroline Andrew was one of the earliest FPS scholars to make mention of violence against women in her 1984 presidential address on women and the welfare state. She argued that service provision in transition homes for "battered women" is better left as a welfare state provision that is "women-controlled," as opposed to state-controlled, because it would "give a different model of providing service—a specifically female model" (1984: 681). What Andrew didn't mention was that funding for shelters and transition homes for women victims of violence, as well as attention to improved laws to address the issue of gender-based violence, would never have been on government agendas were it not for grassroots women's groups lobbying efforts (Collier, 2008). Along with the ask for money has always been a demand for a feminist approach to these services alongside feminist control over programs.

As women's movement activism in Canada grew to include a variety of "women's issues," violence against women and attention to intimate partner violence also grew in Canada in the 1970s and into the 1980s. Yet instead of a feminist approach to the problem, more state attention went to law-and-order approaches that missed

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the narrative surrounding power and control inside of patriarchal structures that were the root causes of violence (Sharma, 1997). S. Laurel Weldon's 2002 cross-national 36-country (including Canada) study of violence against women policy is an important political science analysis of why and when governments will respond to gender-based violence through increased service delivery, public awareness campaigns and positive public policy solutions (Weldon, 2002). She argues that strong autonomous women's movement activism is key, as opposed to other factors often cited in political science research, including the number of women in public office, political culture, region or religion. She further found that countries with strong women's movement actors that worked in tandem with women's policy agencies were more likely to ensure policy responses are enacted and that services were not clawed back. My own research on provincial-level attention to the problem of violence against women found that political party had some impact on government responsiveness levels in that left- and centre-left parties were more likely to respond favourably to strong women's movement demands than right- or centre-right parties in power. The latter will spend similar amounts of money on the category of gender-based violence but will put more of that money into reinforcing law-and-order responses which are often misaligned with women's movement demands (Collier, 2008).

In 1997, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women—at the time, a strong national-level and increasingly intersectional voice of the women's movement in Canada—published a "Voter's Guide" with an entire chapter on male violence against women. That chapter highlighted the problem with the state-preferred law-and-order approach to gender-based violence (GBV): "Confining the government initiatives to legal ones can make us dependent on law and order instead of positive social change. Promoting law and order has sometimes won elections, but it doesn't reduce violence against women" (Sharma, 1997: 65–66).

Feminist legal scholar Elizabeth Sheehy argues that while the law is "an important tool in advancing women's equality rights, law alone cannot end this violence until all women's equality is fully realized" (1999: 62). Indeed, Elaine Craig (2021) notes that while the laws that are "on the books" have advanced significantly since the 1980s, the interpretation and application of those laws remains problematic. Craig illustrates this with three recent sexual assault legal cases that all saw decisions that seemed to embrace legal traditions from the 1800s in Canada more than the progressive laws we now have in place in the current century. In 1892, Canada's Criminal Code only punished rape if it was committed by someone other than a woman's husband, and convictions were impossible unless a woman fought back violently and immediately reported the incident to "rebut the presumption that the complaint was false" (Sheehy, 1999: 63). Yet these 1800s-era assumptions appear to explain the problematic legal decisions in Craig's 2021 study, including that involving former CBC radio personality Jian Ghomeshi's trial verdict (in 2016) which hinged on the confused responses of Ghomeshi's victims who (sometimes repeatedly) sought contact with Ghomeshi after the violent incidents occurred instead of vigorously fighting back and reporting the assaults immediately. Similarly, Judge Robin Camp's 2014 decision to acquit a rapist of a teenaged Indigenous girl was rooted in outdated assumptions about how a survivor should fight back against a perpetrator who outweighed her by 100 pounds. In this case,

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Camp wondered during the trial why the Indigenous survivor couldn't have just "kept her knees together" to prevent the assault in the first place, implying that the fact that she didn't must have signalled consent.

It is easy to understand why anti-gender-based-violence advocates have pushed for state responses that move away from law-and-order solutions, as clearly the laws themselves cannot change sexist, heteronormative, patriarchal, racist and misogynist attitudes and norms that continue to permeate Canadian society. Those norms protect heteronormative male dominance and power, and unless that power and related societal inequities are addressed, gender-based violence will continue unabated in Canadian society.

A Call to Intersectional Interdisciplinary FPS Approaches

Feminist political science is well placed to tackle this problem. We are seeing some important attention to GBV from a variety of theoretical lenses, including black feminist intersectional approaches as well from critical disability feminist thought. Today, I would like to draw attention to two interdisciplinary areas of research that additionally hold a lot of promise to address systemic power inequities that are at the root of gender-based violence in this country and elsewhere. The first research area is feminist institutionalism (FI) and the second is Indigenous feminism.

Feminist institutionalism

Recent research attention to the phenomenon of gender-based violence in politics in Canada and elsewhere has often incorporated a feminist institutionalist approach (see Krook, 2020; Collier and Raney, 2018; Raney and Collier, 2022). Gender-based violence in politics (GBV-P) or violence against women in politics (VAWIP) has been defined across a broad continuum that mirrors the continuum for gender-based violence in society writ large. Mona Lena Krook (2020) defines GBV-P and VAWIP along five typologies—physical, psychological, sexual, economic and semiotic. The Inter-Parliamentary Union reported in 2016 that 81.8 per cent of women politicians worldwide had experienced some form of psychological violence and 44.4 per cent had reportedly received death, rape, beating or abduction threats (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). Krook argues that this wide spectrum of violence against women in politics is often normalized and hidden in the political sphere because it is rooted in formal and informal rules of the political game and is ultimately seen as the "cost" for political participation. Feminist institutionalist approaches have increasingly been used to understand and address the problems associated with GBV-P/VAWIP, particularly because of this informal normalization.

Feminist institutionalism queries how institutions are gendered and then how that gendered "logic of appropriateness" impacts actors inside of political institutional spaces (that is, political parties, legislatures, campaigns), ultimately privileging some (that is, those who are white, male, upper class, older) and disadvantaging others (including gender minorities, women, racialized minorities, and those who are younger, lower class and/or dis/abled). The latter are seen as interlopers or what Puwar (2004) refers to as "space invaders" and are often subjected to violence

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and harassment as punishment for occupying those heteronormative white male institutional spaces.

By paying attention to the gendered embedded logics of political institutions, FI scholars can query reforms that fail to deal with institutional cultures and that layer progressive changes and policies over intransigent gendered rules and norms. Without dealing with these embedded gendered rules and norms, reforms meant to address gender-based violence in politics are unlikely to be successful (Collier and Raney, 2018).

FI scholars note that most gendering of institutions is found in strong unwritten, informal rules that dictate these gendered logics of appropriateness and are particularly sticky and hard to usurp. One key informal institutional norm in many democratic and nondemocratic societies is patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, according to R.W. Connell, "combines cultural dominance with institutional power so that the top echelons of business, government and the military are most likely to house hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2000, quoted in Grant and MacDonald, 2021: 373). Masculinity, in this vein, "is not … the experience of power; it is the experience of *entitlement* to power" (Kimmel, 2000, quoted in Grant and MacDonald, 2021: 378; emphasis mine). Early iterations of feminist institutionalism have touted FI's potential to understand and address the impact of these strongly embedded informal scripts and their acceptance by state actors and inside of formal institutional practices. These include Banaszak and Weldon's comparative application of FI to federal states, where they argue that

> in many countries, informal institutions relegate women to the homemaker role, enforce normative heterosexuality, and/or privilege men in the family and leadership positions. These are not just patterns of behaviour but, rather, informal institutions that are communicated, enforced, and sanctioned through nonofficial channels. These informal institutions are communicated through the media, educational materials, and informal interactions within communities. They are sanctioned by ridicule and social disapprobation, by religious communities' practices, and through violence against women and men who violate gender scripts. (2011: 268)

FI scholarship can be expanded and applied more broadly to all forms of gender-based violence in society by focusing on informal gendered patriarchal, racist and hegemonic masculine rules and institutions. To date, political scientists have not yet directly applied the FI lens to these broad-based informal societal institutions. Alongside hegemonic masculinity, racism, colonialism and capitalism could be investigated to uncover the best ways to usurp powerful informal societal norms and to more fully address women's movement demands to find solutions to gender-based violence (inside and outside of the political realm) that address structural and persistent inequality and unequal power relations.

Indigenous feminism

To this point, I have only briefly mentioned the fact that Indigenous women are most often victimized by gender-based violence in Canada, but this reality has

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been well addressed by Indigenous feminist scholarship. Violence against Indigenous women and Indigenous sexual minorities is not only rooted in hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy but also firmly rooted in colonialism, racism and, in this country, the Indian Act (Green, 1992, 2001). This reality is all too familiar to Indigenous peoples, as some of the statistics I cited earlier attest, but it goes beyond this. In Winnipeg, volunteers for years have organized to dredge the Red River that runs through the city, searching for "the bodies of Indigenous girls and women who have disappeared." The routinized work of the Drag the Red organization is a stark example of how "commonplace an occurrence" gender-based colonial violence is against Indigenous women and girls (Razack, 2016). In 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) published its final report, aptly titled "Reclaiming Power and Place." It put into writing what Indigenous peoples in this country have known for many decades: that the gender-based violence that specifically targets Indigenous women and girls was nothing less than "ongoing, raced-based genocide" (Luoma, 2021: 31)—and a particularly brutal and agonizing "slow genocide," at that (Razack, 2016: i). This genocide is "patriarchal and discriminatory and has severed Indigenous women from their power, their traditional roles, and their communities and lands, thereby increasing their vulnerability to male and state violence" (Razack, 2016: ii).

Indigenous feminism as a theoretical lens can help us understand the complex, intersectional and interlocking (Dhamoon, 2020) nature of gender-based violence. According to Gina Starblanket, this approach

> looks at how power operates along multiple axes—we do not attend to colonial relations of power and gendered forms of oppression merely as isolated phenomena but as systems of power that intersect and culminate both within and outside of Indigenous communities. . . . While there is still much work left on this front, the willingness of Indigenous feminists to understand power as operating in multiples sites and scales offers an important methodological approach to attend to its intersections and variations. . . . Indigenous feminists also recognize that said violence has impacted us differently and are interested in unpacking that difference. (2021: 132)

Drawing on work by groundbreaking Indigenous feminists, including Joyce Green, Billy-Ray Belcourt and Audra Simpson, Starblanket explains the normalized and endemic nature of gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls and how it is inextricably tied to colonial hegemonic masculinity, or what Simpson calls the "gendered, biopolitical nature of setter colonialism." According to Starblanket: "Indigenous women's and girls' bodies have historically been the targets of violence, not just to clear physical bodies from spaces desired for settlement but also because of what said bodies represent; that is, relationships with land, jurisdiction, processes of reproduction, kinship, and, ultimately, difference from Western systems of law and governance" (2021: 122).

An Indigenous feminist approach explains core aspects of the perceived "space invading" that Puwar refers to and which many FI scholars have also referenced (see Lovenduski, 2014) to explain the intent behind gender-based violence in

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political and other spaces of power in society —in all of its intersectionality. The intent of gender-based violence is to prevent women—and particularly racialized women—from normalized access to political and economic power and to punish them for seeking that access. Similarly, gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls punishes them from existing in Canadian colonial spaces—slow genocide indeed.

Concluding Thoughts

In my talk today I hope I have begun to make the case for the centrality of the study of gender-based violence in Canada (and elsewhere) to our discipline. This is fundamental work for political science, and this research should not be seen as niche or peripheral. The publication avenues for normalized, oft-cited and well-known political science research presently do not include attention to sexual harassment, sexual assault or gender-based violence. I have argued that this absence is highly problematic for a discipline that purports to centre itself on understanding power—who has it and who doesn't, and how to access it. If political science researchers continue to marginalize gender-based violence research, we are part of the reason why the norms of hegemonic, toxic, heteronormative, white androcentric masculinity continue to define political success, marginalizing those who do not fit this norm.

Beyond that, I also hope I have made a few of you reconsider a supposedly neutral non-normative approach to political science—one that we are often taught to replicate in our training and ensuing research. Nothing is neutral. Everything is political. By choosing a supposedly neutral pathway inside of the discipline, researchers reaffirm the status quo and do not help advance the discipline.

Perhaps some of you have heard of the wonderful podcast that Ethel Tungohan has created called "Academic Aunties." In this strongly supportive feminist intersectional space, Tungohan often asks guest Aunties a similar question: "Why are political scientists a—holes?" This allows those marginalized and othered in the discipline to vent and have a lane to explore that marginalization. Thus, the podcast allows those same strongly critical and important scholars to explore, find and ultimately be reaffirmed in the work that Dhamoon reminds us "feeds [them] and [their] communit[ies]." We can do meaningful research in political science that is intersectional and that challenges and pushes boundaries to help solve wicked problems like gender-based violence. By incorporating innovative and promising theoretical approaches— including feminist institutionalism and Indigenous feminism, Black and critical disability feminisms, to name a few—we may be able to get closer to positive change in Canada and elsewhere and ultimately help improve the statistics on gender-based violence.

A forthcoming edited collection on gender-based political violence in Canada that I am co-editing with Tracy Raney is one example of the growing attention of feminist political science to gender-based violence that takes up the call to action I started my talk with today. Contributors include next generation FPS scholars willing to push against traditional political science boundaries. As Gina Starblanket reminds us, "Thinking of transformation as departure can be challenging, as it requires a willingness to critically interrogate and perhaps rid ourselves of

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the attachments that continue to hold many of our relations down" (2021: 137). I believe this is a challenge we can ill afford to avoid.

I conclude my talk with two "manifesta" thoughts from US feminist political scientist Shauna Shames, who wrote a short piece in the #MeTooPoliSci issue on "Why I Do Activist Work within the Discipline." (2019). Shames starts with her first manifesta axiom that simply states "I am not crazy" and then builds to her last two that I feel are appropriate to end with today:

> Axiom 7: The discipline is worth fighting for. Despite its many problems and frustrations, I still find meaning in political science. I believe it is an important, collaborative search for truth(s), and specifically answers to that age old question, "How shall we govern ourselves?" (thanks to Jane Mansbridge!)
>
> Axiom 8: "I know political science can be different than it is now. I believe we could support each other more, treat each other better, and really listen to each other, even when we disagree. I know this could feel like a more welcoming space to work. We do not have to accept the discipline as we find it; it can change.
>
> (Shames, 2019: 130)

Thank you for your attention. Merci boucoup.

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Note

1 Personal communication cited by Ethel Tungohan in her podcast, *Academic Aunties*, episode 1, "A-holes in the Academy," March 31, 2021, https://www.academicaunties.com/episodes/page/2/.

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