PAUL KERSHAW AND TAMMY HARKEY

The Politics and Power in Caregiving for Identity: Insights for Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation

Abstract

The authors examine the politics of caregiving for identity to enrich scholarship about power. They report on a qualitative study with Aboriginal mothers who parent in the wake of the Canadian Indian residential schools (IRS). Just as this system disrupted familial caregiving to assimilate Aboriginal Peoples, data show some mothers now strive to organize their caregiving in ways that serve decolonization and community empowerment. Building on their expertise, the authors argue that counter-colonial family policy investments to support such caregiving should factor in any just compensation for the IRS system if its population, and not just individual, costs are to be redressed.

The Politics and Power in Caregiving for Identity: Insights for Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation

The examination of caregiving is an established intellectual tradition in political science internationally. This topic receives

attention in multiple related literatures, including scholarship about the ethics of care, which has important origins in the work by Tronto (1993); the feminist citizenship literature, as engaged with by Lister (2003) among others; the literature on gender and welfare regimes initiated by Langan and Ostner (1991), Lewis (1992), Orloff (1993), Williams (1995), and others; and a literature that explores the politics of empowerment among minority ethnocultural women, which Collins (1991) influenced considerably. In this article, we contribute to these literatures by sharpening the understanding of what is political about caregiving in order to enrich the study of power.

Since it routinely occurs in "private" domestic spheres, the literature generally discounts informal caregiving as an act of political citizenship (for a notable exception, see Prokhovnik 1998). This treatment has been revisited in feminist scholarship by Lister (2003; 2007a, 2007b) and Paul Kershaw (2005, 2010a, 2010b) in a series of publications. Lister (2007b, 56) observes how feminist literatures widely acknowledge that care is "an expression of social citizenship responsibilities [that] should be accorded equal value with paid work obligations," but generally recommends that feminists resist embracing caregiving as political citizenship. In contrast, Kershaw argues that to disqualify "private" caregiving entirely from the domain of the political discounts the group power to which minority ethnocultural parents contribute when they resist any denigrating public images they and their children confront. By working to ensure that children cultivate a proud affiliation with their family's place in a broader cultural history, Kershaw observes that ethnic minority mothers contribute to the self-definition of the collective minority identity, and the collective political agency to which this self-definition gives rise. The implication is that some "domestic care functions as resistance to oppression that stretches well beyond the particular homes in which the work is performed because it contributes to a broader project of community development" (Kershaw 2005, 116). Such resistance, he maintains, is a quintessential act of political citizenship, regardless of the location in which it is performed, domestic or otherwise (Kershaw 2010a).

In this article, we support the position that at least some "private" caregiving for identity is political citizenship because it contributes to a population's empowerment and politicization. We do so by learning from caregivers who rear children in the wake of the Indian residential schools (IRS) system in Canada. Similar to the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, Canada initiated in the nineteenth century a system of compulsory residential schools for Status Indians under age 16. It grew to eighty institutions by the

1930s, when as many as 11,000 children a year were coercively recruited (Milloy 1999, 58). Following a 1969 decision to end the residential system, the last school closed in 1996. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology for the IRS system in 2008 concedes that Canadian governments organized the caregiving of children from First Nations, the Inuit and Métis to function as a colonial mechanism. He explained, "Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'" (Government of Canada 2008).

We examine the legacy of the IRS system to learn about the politics of caregiving by collaborating with women who are the children and grandchildren of school survivors, and who today confront as parents the challenge of rearing the next Aboriginal generation. Their expertise is examined within a theoretical framework that integrates ideas from Kershaw and Collins about caregiving as political resistance, the theme of biopolitics developed by Foucault (1976), and the anti-colonial research of Fanon (1967) as it has been adapted for the study of Indigenous Peoples in Canada by Alfred and Corntassel (2005), as well as Coulthard (2007). These literatures converge, the caregivers in our study imply, when examined in the light of the Indigenous emphasis on story-telling to which King (2003), Cruikshank (1998), and Kenny (2006) refer. When caregiving fosters agency, our study participants show it is importantly about story-telling: stories to resist; stories to ensure cultural continuity; and stories to promote ethnocultural community development over time. Informed by the experiential expertise of our study participants, caregiving can be seen as a dense transfer point for power relations—both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic—because the caregiver–child interaction is a population conduit from past to future. Controlling the stories that individuals and communities care to transfer to successive generations becomes an intimate power technology by which to influence the agency of populations over time. We will show that disciplining IRS students to refrain from telling traditional stories to the offspring for whom they would eventually care proved a potent part of the IRS system's arsenal in stemming the intergenerational dissemination of identities among members of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Simultaneously, caregiving provides a political mechanism for members of the latter groups to resist such cultural disruption. Regaining the confidence, and associated personal and collective power, to re-discover, adapt,

and/or narrate self-selected (but not essentialist) identity stories is a
"private" struggle of Aboriginal citizenship for many mothers with
whom we collaborate.

Our contribution to the debate about caregiving as political citizenship is not simply about resolving a theoretical dispute. Acknowledging the political activity inherent in some caregiving is generally important when designing appropriate valuation methods for the social reproduction to which caregiving contributes—social reproduction which is excluded from GDP and other standard measures of economic progress. More specifically, we also maintain that recognizing the politics in caregiving for identity has significant implications for the IRS Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was launched in Canada as part of a compensation strategy for the legacy of the residential schools. Although "healing" is a dominant refrain in the Prime Minister's apology and in the TRC mandate (Truth and Reconciliation Canada 2008a, 2008b), our focus on caregiving and family policy is not a medicalized interpretation of the IRS legacy. While many survivors indeed strive to heal, we present caregiving as a technology of power which should make us cautious about any discourse that implies victims need therapy more so than justice (see Chrisjohn and Young 2006). Our evidence supports substantial public redistribution in response to the abuse that was inflicted on individuals, communities, and Peoples by the IRS system. Since much of this abuse occurred because the state obstructed caregiving practices, we argue that some of this redistribution is best delivered through public investment in counter-colonial family policy. Our argument thus provides a partial answer to Alfred and Corntassel (2005, 610), who query "Where should strategies to generate a resurgence of Indigenous nationhood be focused?"

We develop the article in four sections. The first describes the theoretical motivation to collaborate with Aboriginal participants to study caregiving. The next two sections present excerpts from their narratives. In Section 2, we examine the population-control strategy implemented by the IRS system when it disrupted parental and community caregiving for identity. This section provides background to explore narrative excerpts in Section 3 which showcase how some, but not all, Aboriginal women in our sample are turning the tables on the IRS system by relying on personal caregiving strategies to contribute to the revitalization of their cultures. In the Section 4, we show how counter-colonial family policy could be an effective part of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada and propose some important policy design considerations.

The Politics in Caregiving: Investigating the Legacy of IRS

Our article features the expertise of twenty Aboriginal mothers who speak about contributing to the identities of their children as a form of care. Their testimony is part of the Care, Identity and Inclusion (CII) project, which evolved in response to literature that casts doubt on the status of caregiving as political activity. Project leaders anticipated that Indigenous parents might have relevant expertise precisely because their childrearing follows in the wake of IRS efforts to disrupt the familial and community child rearing to which their own parents and grand-parents had access.

Milloy (1999) explains that colonization in Canada resulted for Indigenous communities in substantial depopulation because of the importation of European diseases, along with geographic relocation and cultural disruption. State actors regarded First Nations as obstacles to territory and natural resources required for the expansion of capitalist industry, as well as potential labor to supply the modernizing state (Coulthard 2007; Milloy 1999; Schissel and Wotherspoon 2003, chapter 3). To facilitate "the pacification of tribal nations," the federal government instituted the first Indian Act in 1869, which gave the state direct control of "Indian governments and communities, stripping them of any formal, institutional means of participating in their own development and defending their culture" (Milloy 1999, 57). Further legislation rendered illegal various Aboriginal religious and cultural rituals by which communities organized traditional networks of economic and social exchange, while police, courts, medical facilities, child welfare agencies, and schools influenced individuals to conform to Eurocentric norms.

Starting in 1879, IRS became a lynchpin in the Canadian government's strategy to regulate Aboriginal identities by "severing the inter-generational artery of culture that was the profound connection between parent and child sustaining family and community" (Milloy 1999, 59). From the age of six to sixteen, children were "removed from their communities, from their parents, 'the old unimprovable people'. . . . They were then to be 'kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions', the residential schools, where . . . the children would undergo 'the transformation from the natural condition to that of civilisation'. . . . Such a metamorphosis and skill training – trades and agriculture for boys, domestic crafts for girls – would enable them to find places in 'white' Canada . . ." (Milloy 1999, 58). Duncan Campbell Scott, former deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, reveals in his parliamentary committee address of 1920 the extent to which the federal government intended the IRS to

transform the signifiers of Indigenous identities . "Our objective," Scott explained, "is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian problem and no Indian Department" (quoted in Milloy 1999, 57). Given this intent, many concede it is defensible to describe the schools as a system of cultural genocide (e.g., Chrisjohn and Young 2006; Milloy 1999; Schissel and Wotherspoon 2003).

Since the state disrupted caregiving as a tactic to assault Indigenous identities, CII project leaders engaged Aboriginal mothers to explore how cultural retention influences their sense of social belonging generally, and their approaches to child caregiving specifically. We anticipated that the IRS system may make the theme of identity transmission particularly germane to First Nations parents: germane either because they opt (a) to downplay this transmission for many reasons, including a perceived lack of familiarity with signifiers of these identities and/or out of fear that their children may be stigmatized by expressing allegiance to them; or (b) to sharpen focus on rediscovering or adapting some signifiers in response to the legacy of colonization. This legacy, Alfred and Corntassel (2005, 589–597) argue, is as much a matter of the present as it is the past because "domination is still the Settler imperative but . . . colonizers have designed and practice more subtle means (in contrast to the earlier forms of missionary and militaristic colonial enterprises)." Subtle means include, they suggest, government imposition of the homogenizing label "aboriginal," which distracts individual affiliation from social ties to specific Indigenous communities, cultures, or homelands.

In partnering with mothers to explore these issues, the CII project was organized with full appreciation for the ethical considerations that inhere in research involving Aboriginal Peoples, as described in the "Ethical Guidelines for Research" by Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, 325–328), and the policy statement about research involving Aboriginal Peoples from the major funders of academic research in Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 1998). In response to these considerations, the CII project diligently organized research with the potential to benefit the Aboriginal communities involved; to enable representatives of the communities to participate in planning, executing, interpreting, and applying the research, including by co-authoring this paper; and to hone the skills of individuals to enrich the capacity of community members with respect to research and/or other community development pursuits. In pursuit of these goals, all research funding was

allocated directly to the community partners to manage over the project's three-year duration. In contrast to the colonizing practices implicit in much scholarship, the decision to empower the community partners with fiduciary responsibility aimed to mitigate the power differentials that typically favor university partners when collaborating with communities.

The CII project research design is described in detail in Kershaw (in press). Data collection rested primarily on a combination of journaling by two Aboriginal collaborators who participated as Project Executive members, along with a series of interviews conducted with eighteen other Aboriginal participants. The twenty women all reside on reserves that fall within or adjacent to urban centers, and nineteen live within the colonial boundaries of the lower mainland of British Columbia. The project did not seek to generalize about the content of cultural identity or caregiving practices across Indigenous Peoples because there is much diversity across Canada. Rather, the CII team approached members primarily from two Nations to share insights specifically about the politics and community power that may or may not inhere in their personal caregiving. Kershaw (2010a) finds that caregivers who belong to a range of minority ethnocultural groups in Canada share converging insights about this theme.

The journals and interviews in the project were semi-structured. The Aboriginal Executive members of the research team elected to journal initially in response to the question: Do you or your children have to compromise part of your identity to feel included? Why or why not? This journaling helped to prepare the Executive members to conduct up to four interviews with each of the other eighteen participants, half in year 2, and half in year 3. The interviews began with the question: Is it important to you to pass on your cultural identity to your children? Why or why not? Subsequent interviews included questions that responded specifically to observations shared by individual interviewees, but also posed common questions for all participants. These included: What, if anything, would be lost if your child does not learn your culture(s)? Where or with whom do you feel like you belong? Do you encounter discrimination based on your race or ethnicity? How do you foster a sense of pride for yourself or your children? In the third year, we also invited interviewees to reflect on observations shared by participants in the previous year of interviews in order to perform a qualitative-validity check of our narrative data. Following each year of interviews, the Aboriginal Executive team members shared their reactions, reflections, and interpretations through a series of summer journals.

Notwithstanding important work by Doucet (2006) and others to integrate the perspectives of men in research about caregiving, the methodological decision to sample only mothers in the CII study reflects the still pervasive gender division of caregiving, which positions women to be more familiar than men with the diverse aspects of social reproduction to which caregiving contributes. But by illuminating the linkages between caregiving and citizenship, the article shows the importance of social policies that require men to share equally with women in the work of caregiving (Gornick and Meyers 2008; Kershaw 2005, 2006; Lister 2003).

The IRS System: Alternate Caregivers Enforcing Assimilation Stories

In *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative,* King (2003, 2) argues "that's all we are" stories. Stories are far more fundamental than mere entertainment (2003, 92). Individuals need stories to understand and interpret the world (2003, 32). They tell stories to guide their responses to others, to their actions, and especially to their injustices. As Cruikshank (1998, xiii) argues, "an enduring value of informal storytelling is its power to subvert official orthodoxies and to challenge conventional ways of thinking." In the light of these observations, Cruikshank and King both maintain that individuals live the stories they tell. "One way or another," King (2003, 153) explains, citing Okri (1997, 46), "we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives."

Because stories contribute to meaning-making in addition to being an expression of agency, King implies that those who shape narratives have considerable potential to influence individuals and the groups in which they belong. In recognizing the power of storytellers, King's work intersects with the literature about caregiving motivated by Collins (1991, 1994), and which Kershaw has developed in more recent publications (2005; 2010a). For the latter, caregivers are especially important storytellers when they strategically deploy narratives to compensate for private or public actors who ignore or misrepresent the identities of the ethnic and faith communities to which they belong. Jenny, an Aboriginal mother of two, and a leader in her community, embodies this point. She explains that she responds to racially slanderous experiences by recounting

community and family narratives that support her children to defy the denigrating images others would impose:

> My children have met on several occasions with racism. . . . On the last occasion that my daughter met racism, we talked about our Grandmother. We talked about what she lived through [in the IRS system], the changes in lifestyle, the pain, the torture, the survivance. It brings a calm to the storm, to reflect, and to recompose. If I had to summarize how I handle these situations, it would revolve around dialogue with my children, truly open dialogue, often met with tears and then a game plan for the next time the attack occurs, and of course . . . a way to release the false belief that was slightly ingrained in our heads because of the racism.

It is not only Aboriginal mothers who resist the distorted stories others seek to tell about their community. In Canada, Kershaw (2010a) shows that such resistance is a political strategy which new immigrant mothers also deploy when they belong to minority ethno-cultural and/or faith groups that are the targets of institutionalized discrimination, including Black Canadians and Canadians of Muslim faith. He refers to Bibi, an immigrant originally from Congo, to develop this position. According to Bibi, "building my children's identities is as important as providing them food and water because it will help them develop survival strategies.. . . I know from life experience that a strong ethnic identity can help anyone to develop self-esteem, the ability to cope with discrimination and racism, and succeed in life . . . ." (in Kershaw 2010a, 399).

The survival strategies with which Bibi equates building her children's identities point directly to what the IRS system attacked in Aboriginal communities. By displacing the familial and community caregivers from whom First Nations, Inuit and Métis children would otherwise have received routine nurturance, the IRS system undermined the power those caregivers had to build proud minority identities with their offspring. This disruption of care assaulted entire communities and Nations, because the state, in collaboration with various denominations of the Christian Church, usurped greater control over the stories that would guide the next generations of Aboriginal citizens. A population-level assault of this kind invokes the biopolitics examined by Foucault (1976) in *The History of Sexuality*.

For Foucault (1976), biopolitics concern the production and regulation of populations, and are manifest in government efforts to manage the birthrate, lifespan, public health, and labor supply. The power to produce and regulate populations has less to do with

formal political institutions or individuals than it does with social norms. The management of populations, he argues, "needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms" (144). Such management is "ensured . . . not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control . . . " (89). Foucault alerts social scientists to the power inherent in a "normalizing society" (144). He urges scholars to investigate the social interactions where norms can be shaped, perpetuated, and/or recalibrated over time, because such interactions provide especially potent technologies to influence whole populations. The norms, attitudes, and behaviors prescribed by social constructions of sexuality, he adds, encompass just these kinds of interactions, representing "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population" (103).

In ways that parallel Foucault's analysis of sexuality, orchestrators of IRS used the care of children to regulate the life of the population. Child care occurs at the nexus of generations, providing the opportunity to influence entire Peoples as they evolve over time (see Schissel and Wotherspoon 2003, 60). Mable illustrates this potential when describing the disruption to intergenerational dynamics within her family that resulted from her parents' tenure at residential schools.

> Mable: They [Residential school organizers] ripped our parents out of their parents' arms, tortured them, abused them. . . . My parents were tormented, and I know that it has impacted me forever. . . . My dad knows so much. But he stopped at a certain age teaching the kids. Each child was stopped at elementary school.
> Interviewer: Why is that?
> Mable: To protect us. So we would not be targeted, abused, or face racism.

In this excerpt, Mable anticipates the broader population regulation with which Foucault associates biopolitics. Whereas previous commentators about the IRS system, such as Hookimaw-Witt (1998), appropriately emphasize that "education" or "schools" were used as tools for population control, Mable suggests that a focus on pedagogy is too narrow to fully appreciate the population-level assault launched by the IRS system, and its legacy today. Instead, she reminds us that the targets of residential schools included individuals who would never attend: namely, the potential care recipients of school survivors; their children and grand-children; the very future of Aboriginal communities. The disruption of familial and

community care by the schools thereby impacted entire Aboriginal communities.

The resulting population control imposed by the IRS system on members of generations that did not even attend the schools is captured by Rebecca. When asked to critically reflect on Bibi's observation about the importance of caregiving for identity, Rebecca answers:

> I am working so hard for my kids to be proud. But it is a tough job. I am recovering from a system that beat us down as a people. So, I do all that I can. My intentions are good. But I feed my kids more than I teach them culture. . . . You know what I mean, right? I will get to this one day. But I can only teach what I know, and so many of us here in [Rebecca's community] are just learning the culture. It's so sad and painful. To want to be proud. To want to know. To have to dig.

The near poetry with which Rebecca articulates her frustration in struggling, but striving, to learn and teach culture illuminates the population control imposed by the IRS system: it attacked the ability of the community to define itself over time. By refashioning the norms and identities that guide social groups into the future, the legacy of the residential schools shows that caregiving (or not) for identity is a technology by which to exert power over populations through time, just as Foucault envisions with the concept of biopolitics.

Although its mandate refers to "intergenerational consequences" (2008a, 2008b, section 1(f)), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008a, 2008b, 17) risks failing to engage sufficiently with the IRS system's intergenerational assault because its scope is "primarily centered around the legacy of the childhood experiences of former students." While without exception every Aboriginal CII participant affirms the value of creating safe spaces for former students to describe the abuse they suffered and their efforts to resist, mothers in the CII project also suggest this focus is too narrow. Attending primarily to individual student experiences diverts attention from the relationship between individuals, generational exchanges, and social processes that sustain communities over time. The fact that individuals "want to know," but "have to dig" is a tremendous worry to some in Aboriginal communities precisely because members recognize that their seemingly "private" caregiving can contribute importantly to community development, just as Collins (1991, 1994) and Kershaw (2005, 2010a) have argued elsewhere. Jenny, who is more politicized than most in the CII sample, alerts scholars to this dynamic. She maintains that

Caregiving is the grounding force to identity. It is here that we shape and mold the beginnings of our children, a beginning that allows them to later re-mold, re-shape and alter their own personal identity. When the caregiving denies the development of identity, or when it denies identity, it is merely survival, food and shelter, the bare necessities. This might have been my mother's existence, a survival mode for years. When we nurture our children in a positive, strong sense of culture, Aboriginal culture the community development is inherent, it is one and the same. In my teaching, very rarely do we separate one's self from the family, from the community, it is all so connected. When we build identity in the home (caregiving) we build community and when we build community, we strengthen the power of the whole.

For women like Jenny, then, it is only by recognizing the intergenerational attack imposed by disrupting caregiving that we appreciate fully the harm which members of Aboriginal communities continue to suffer regardless of whether they attended a residential school or not. This is a theme that Barton et al. (2005) overlook in their study of the quality of life of residential school survivors in Bella Coola, British Columbia. While they confirm that there are substantial differences in well-being between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, they find almost no differences in health between Aboriginal survivors of the residential schools and Aboriginal community members who did not attend. According to Barton et al., their data provide "evidence contrary to the received view of the devastation of the residential school experience" (295). In contrast, CII participants alert us to an alternative interpretation of the Barton et al. data. Although they acknowledge the specificity of the suffering that school attendees describe (recall Jenny urging her children to remember their Grandmother), they are adamant that that the victims of the IRS system were not exclusively attendees. The system targeted members of Aboriginal communities generally, and over time, because the schools destabilized the cultural continuity to which "private" caregiving can contribute by interfering with the content that caregivers would share with offspring. We thus need not anticipate that there will be intra-Aboriginal community differences in health as a result of IRS attendance versus non-attendance. Rebecca makes this point explicit when she asks rhetorically: "How long will it be until we can talk about the Residential School like it was the past, not a part of the present?"

Caregiving for the Politics of Cultural Revitalization

Just as disrupting caregiving functioned effectively as a colonital mechanism, so caregiving can be a political strategy to restore appreciation for, and adaption of, the cultural stories, norms, and knowledge that persist today despite the attack of residential schools, reserves, the Indian Act, and other government interventions that were (and remain) intent on assimilation. For some women, in fact, becoming a mother is an important moment in their politicization. Mary, for instance, explains that "Every day" she fears her children will encounter discrimination:

> Interviewer: Is [racism] as strong today as it was when you were a child?
> Mary: Not as apparent but it is still there and maybe that is worse. . . . I don't think you realize it right away (long pause). You see it years later. Maybe you pretend it is not so. And then as you become a parent you say, I will not let that happen to my children.

Given the emphasis she places on identity politics for the well-being of her family and Nation, Jenny is already attuned to much of the resilience her People showed in the face of the IRS system's population-level attack on local cultural knowledge—resilience that manifests itself partly through the care she received from her grandmother and mother, both survivors of the IRS system. In response, she turns to precisely the same "private" caregiving mechanism which IRS organizers aimed to usurp in order to accelerate the politics of cultural revitalization. "As a mother," Jenny explains:

> one of the most important tasks that I have undertaken is the role of creating identity in my children. . . . I have chosen to introduce culture first, and allow this to guide all other aspects of their individual identity. For far too long, my extended and immediate family has had our culture taken away, by banning our culture and the use of our language. I guess you could say that I have turned the tables and made 100% certain that my children have seen and heard and tested every aspect of their cultural identity. And then the other elements of their unique identities can be shaped by their decisions . . . .

Other Aboriginal mothers in the study, however, are far less conscious than Jenny about the potential political power that inheres in their caregiving for identity. For instance, René indicates that "Knowing our culture isn't mandatory, just as long as my children respect themselves and are willing to learn new things about themselves." René's stated indifference about cultural continuity reflects

in part her view that "Being Aboriginal today is a lot easier than many years ago. The school system is where children suffered the most. But today there are consequences that follow racial remarks or any negative actions. My children don't have a problem with being targeted for their nationality." René advocates this position, even though she concedes in her very next sentence that "With my experience as a mother, I feel that Aboriginal children and families are targeted as being behind before entering the school system."

Jenny and René represent diverging poles along a continuum of politicization regarding their commitment to care for identity in ways that are cognizant of the harm imposed by the IRS system and other colonial interventions. They do so without ever implying nostalgia for an authentic or essentialist cultural norm, since even Jenny expects her children to individually shape their unique identities through decisions that may or may not embrace their cultural histories. The majority of Aboriginal mothers in the CII project fall in between these poles. For instance, Leslie signals she is discouraged by the challenges involved in digging for identity, when one just wants to know. "It's hard to learn about [our culture]," she maintains, "because who do you ask and who's going to be honest? There are different teachings from different people." While equally frustrated by the need to dig when wanting to know, Rebecca is less discouraged than Leslie. Amid her struggles to learn about Aboriginal identities, she indicates "I am proud. I am proud to pass down my culture. I want more. I want to make up for years of being separated or maybe even ashamed of who I am. . . . I feel ashamed that there was a time when I doubted my culture."

One implication of the pride that Rebecca and some others derive from their child rearing is that attention to the formation of cultural identity can be an important way of developing the self-esteem needed to resist misrepresentation in public spaces. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) have empirically explored the link between cultural continuity and self-esteem by examining suicide rates across Aboriginal communities in British Columbia. Their findings are telling. First, they explode the myth that Aboriginal rates of suicide are uniformly higher than the rates among non-Aboriginal Canadians. Instead, Chandler and Lalonde show there is tremendous variability in suicide rates among 196 Aboriginal bands in British Columbia. Of these, 111 reported no cases of suicide over five years, whereas some communities reported rates that are 800 times the national average. Second, Chandler and Lalonde reveal that the variability associates with community markers of Aboriginal cultural continuity, including: "(a) evidence that particular bands had taken steps to secure Aboriginal title to their traditional lands; (b) evidence

of having taken back from government agencies certain rights of self-government; evidence of having secured some degree of community control over (c) educational services; (d) police and fire protection services; and (e) health delivery services; and finally, (f) evidence of having established within their communities certain officially recognized 'cultural facilities' to help preserve and enrich their cultural lives" (209). Examining these markers, Chandler and Lalonde find a linear pattern: suicide rates declined as Aboriginal communities enjoy more markers of cultural continuity and community control; and those which enjoy all six markers witnessed no suicides over a five-year period.

Notwithstanding the importance of their findings, Chandler and Lalonde lament that their epidemiological analysis is hampered by the dearth of variables available to measure cultural rehabilitation across Aboriginal communities. They therefore suspect that their "collection of marker variables is only a subset of what is undoubtedly a much larger array of such protective factors." The insights shared above by Mary, Jenny, René, Leslie, and Rebecca confirm their point, because these CII participants alert us to a community protective factor that has not yet been measured quantitatively: child caregiving strategies which empower community members to resist misrecognition by providing children with a positive counter-narrative about their own culture; one that will serve child and parent alike as a resource when the outside world denigrates their identity.

Qualitative data from the CII project provide preliminary evidence that caring for the production of counter-narratives varies between Aboriginal communities. Recall that our sample of Aboriginal participants is drawn primarily from two Nations in the lower mainland of British Columbia. One is home to Jenny, Rebecca, and others who are relatively politicized about the politics of self-definition they perform when caregiving. Tina, for instance, recalls, "When I was growing up I knew there were a lot of kids who were ashamed from the racist remarks. But if you're strong with your identity and you're proud of where you came from, then you're not going to let narrow minded people get to you." She therefore feels "a huge responsibility" as a mother to ensure her "children have a healthy sense of self: personal power, positive self-esteem, positive view of personal future and a sense of purpose."

By contrast, Leslie, who indicated above that she is not sure with whom to consult about her Nation's culture, and René, who maintains it is not "mandatory" for her children to know about their Aboriginal heritage, share membership on a reserve that appears less politicized about Canada's colonial legacy than are the members of

Jenny's Nation. In the absence of such politicization, it is not surprising that caregivers in René's community were less concerned to emphasize in their parenting the rediscovery of certain Aboriginal identity signifiers. But in the relative absence of caregivers who explicitly nurture their Nation's dynamic identity, it is also unsurprising that there is less politicization in the community about the assimilation imposed by the IRS system.

The counter-colonial caregiving for identity to which some, but not all, Aboriginal mothers refer in the CII study can inform the decolonization strategies that Alfred and Corntassel (2005) and Coulthard (2007) propose. Following the work of North African anti-colonial writer Fanon (1967), these scholars reject the idea that decolonization and cultural regeneration are solely rooted in "collective and institutional processes" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 611). They "start" instead "with people transcending colonialism on an individual basis – a strength that soon reverberates outward from the self to family, clan, community and into all of the broader relationships that form an Indigenous existence" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 612). Such starting points echo the expertise shared by Jenny, Rebecca, and Tina, who observe that they contribute to community development and collective pride by nurturing Indigenous identities within their children. Indeed, Rebecca's desire to know amid her need to dig into the content of her Aboriginal cultural affiliations is precisely the sort of "struggle to critically reclaim and revaluate the worth of [one's] own histories, traditions and cultures" that Coulthard (2007, 453) emphasizes for members of First Nations. For Coulthard (2007, 449), personal struggle and, as Fanon would suggest, "conflict" represent examples of the "transformative praxis" that is required for "the colonized . . . to shed their colonial identities." The mothers in Jenny's Nation present a counterpoint to this focus on conflict by showcasing that their personal caregiving and childrearing also represent transformative practices by which they strive to identify, resist, and possibly even rid themselves of what Coulthard (2007) terms the "'arsenal of complexes' driven into the core of their being through the colonial process." Their political resistance through caregiving even anticipates the non-violent warrior that Alfred and Corntassel (2005, 613) invoke in the last of their five "mantras" for a "resurgent Indigenous movement." "Change Happens one Warrior at a Time," they insist: "our people must reconstitute the mentoring and learning-teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity. The movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal, groups and one-on-one mentoring towards a

new path." Jenny, Mary, Rebecca, and Tina agree showcasing the transformations available when citizens commit to the politics of caregiving for cultural rehabilitation.

Family Policy

The analysis of the IRS system we offer in this article observes that residential schools robbed parents of the time to care personally for their children; and robbed communities of the opportunity to support families in culturally appropriate ways to nurture intergenerational identity transfer over time. The legacy of this disruption for parents and communities today is the unique difficulty of learning and teaching culture *simultaneously*.

Insofar as the IRS system deployed caregiving policy as a population assimilation strategy, so caregiving policy ought to be at the forefront of discussions about what constitutes a just remedy for the legacy of the residential schools. We argue that just restitution must prioritize restoring and renovating what was previously undermined—family time and community supports—if the population, and not just individual, costs of the IRS are to be addressed. The implementation of such caregiving policy must occur in full recognition of the financial constraints imposed on families and communities by the reserve system, the appropriation of land in the absence of treaties, and the Indian Act (Coulthard 2007). Regrettably, caregiving policy, or "family policy," has not galvanized the attention of Canadians as they embark on their own version of Truth and Reconciliation. This reflects the dominance of individualized strategies such as compensation payments to former IRS residents. Insufficient attention has so far been paid to policies that would support caregiver time and local family services as a community-level intervention to complement individual compensation.

The care*fair* policy framework that Kershaw (2005) articulates for Canada, along with the earner/caregiver vision proposed by Gornick and Meyers (2008) as part of the Real Utopia project, includes building blocks for the family policy changes that are supported by the CII data. Both frameworks propose measures to make individual time available to care personally in combination with community services to help citizens synchronize their caregiving with economic provisioning. Sufficient time to care for identity requires policy that responds to life course stages when caregiving responsibilities are particularly acute, along with policies that articulate a commitment to moderate work–life conflict more generally. In terms of the former, well-designed parental leave benefits are imperative. A combination of fifty weeks of maternity and parental leave benefits exist in Canada through employment insurance (EI), which

is a duration that UNICEF (2008) indicates is solid by international standards. But the same report shows that the maximum Canadian benefit value of 55 percent of $43,200 is modest by standards in many European countries—not even half of the average full-time, full-year national income. Since the benefit value is income-contingent, lower income-earning parents receive less than the maximum, and may be unable to afford leave because of the associated drop in income. Given the racialized earnings gap in Canada, some like Iyer (1997) have challenged the Canadian leave system on the grounds that it unjustly redistributes income away from less economically privileged minority ethnocultural caregivers toward more economically affluent, white caregivers. Regrettably, the EI system does not yet collect data that can be analyzed by ethnicity, so it is not possible to document whether Aboriginal Canadians contribute to, but ultimately under-utilize, the leave system compared to other groups.

In response, changes to the Canadian parental leave system proposed by Kershaw (2005, 2006; see also Kershaw et al. 2009) merit further attention in the Truth and Reconciliation process. These would increase the benefit value to 80 percent of maximum insurable earnings so that leave is more affordable to lower-income earners. They would also include a minimum flat-rate benefit for parents who are not eligible for paid leave. The minimum benefit would acknowledge the community development that can inhere in caregiving for identity, along with the social value of quality early childhood development experiences for all children regardless of the caregiver's previous earnings. A flat-rate minimum benefit will be especially important on-reserves where unemployment rates are higher than off-reserve. The care*fair* concept also proposes to extend the number of benefit months available to a household, reserving a substantial portion of the additional time exclusively for fathers (see also Gornick and Meyers 2008), with appropriate exceptions for single, divorced, and lesbian mothers. Reserving time for fathers is necessary to minimize the risk that leave benefits reinforce the gender division of caregiving in which many men free-ride on the caregiving of diverse groups of women. In the context of Truth and Reconciliation, Aboriginal fathers have as much responsibility to care for identity as do mothers, and Aboriginal men have as much to teach and to learn in this area as do women.

The ability to balance caregiving and earning requires imaginative policy solutions, since job-creation and employment are important to remedy the rates of poverty from which Aboriginals disproportionately suffer (Richards 2000). The care*fair* vision recommends revising employment standards to accommodate shorter full-time

employment hours over the year. It proposes the French norm of 1,600 h per year as a benchmark (for a related discussion, see Gornick and Meyers 2008). The French alternative is 127 h (over three weeks) less than the average annual employment hours performed by Canadians (OECD 2010). In the context of recognition politics, Jenny emphasizes why it is important to prioritize policy changes to promote greater work–life balance. At present, she observes that employment success typically means embracing time rhythms that privilege the majority cultural context. "Each year," she recounts, "my family participates in the longhouse, a season that beholds so much of my culture. Ceremonies are longer than a day. They can run for 18 h, or three days. This season is a season of travel, a season of labor, and a season of celebration. I can generally attend one or two of the thirty plus celebrations each year. Why? Well, work does not allow me to adjust my schedule to participate in events that are meaningful to me. I call that giving up my identity." Since similar risks to personal identity are observed in employment research by Kenny (2006) and Hunter (2000), Jenny's observation invites scholars and senior levels of government to affirm that recognition politics relate far more intimately to work–life balance debates than is typically acknowledged.

Although our analysis underscores that "private" caregiver–child time will be an important mechanism by which self-defined cultural revitalization continues within Aboriginal communities, private time will be insufficient for cultural rejuvenation efforts. Given that the IRS system disrupted intergenerational caregiving dynamics, most Aboriginal participants in the CII project affirm that culturally appropriate public activity now must also be key sources of support for their individual child-rearing strategies. Reserves around the lower mainland of British Columbia represent for many mothers in the CII project a place of cultural re-discovery and heightened personal awareness of the cultural retention that many have secured despite Canada's colonial interventions. Key support mechanisms on-reserve include family and parent–child programs that promote cultural vitality, along with child care services that prioritize exposure to the languages and cultures of First Nations (Ball and Pence 2006). The substantial public investment in early learning and care services recommended by Kershaw (2005), Kershaw et al. (2009), Gornick and Meyers (2008), and others is consistent with this finding.

In addition to on-reserve community services, it is imperative for the Truth and Reconciliation process to examine family policy that supports cultural (re)vitalization programs beyond reserves where three-quarter of Aboriginal citizens reside. Aboriginal HIPPY is a

program model that ought to be considered for expansion. This program fosters parent–child time by visiting family homes on- and off-reserve. The outreach model is well-designed to invite the diversity of Aboriginal parents who reside in urban settings to integrate their particular Aboriginal affiliations into their child caregiving, including time they devote to confronting the implications of the IRS system for their children's future school experiences. In this way, Aboriginal HIPPY celebrates and strengthens what was historically undermined by the IRS: parent–child time enjoyed in one's self-defined cultural context. Additional public investment to help refurbish the cultural continuity to which this time contributes seems a fitting component of any just compensation from the people of Canada.

We should expect, however, that cultural rediscovery and adaptation on- and off-reserve will be rife with ethical tensions that receive insufficient attention in the literature. Recall Leslie, for instance, who observes above that "It's hard to learn about [our culture] because who do you ask and who's going to be honest? There's different teachings from different people." Such differences are far from trivial, particularly in regard to faith. For instance, Veronica observes, "My family is strongly rooted to the Church and all of them were so abused at the residential school. Is that not amazing? They follow the Church that beat them and sexually abused them . . .." Rebecca expresses similar surprise. She posits that "the tension stems from those that were beaten at school and they now follow the white man's way of life." "But what do they follow, when or if you interview them," she asks? "What would they say about culture? . . . Would they say, 'I want my children to be proud Pentecostal Indians?' And what does that mean?"

Rebecca's questions cut to the core of support for group-differentiated rights within political liberalism. Readers will recall that Kymlicka's (1989, 1995) important defense of multicultural citizenship rests on the observation that cultural membership allows for meaningful individual choice. Any aspirations to restrict the spiritual autonomy of minority community members in order to sustain the character or values of a community, in his view, contradict the very purpose for defending group-differentiated entitlements in the first place. Kymlicka therefore concludes that multicultural citizenship cannot justify intra-community restrictions which contravene individual civil rights. To illustrate his argument, he critiques the Pueblo theocracy, which curtails religious freedom in order to limit the activities of Protestant community members out of concern that the latter risks the traditional character of Pueblo culture.

Several Aboriginal participants in the CII project such as Rebecca urge proponents of Truth and Reconciliation to frame the issue differently to be more attuned to the historical role that the Church played in the political disruption of Aboriginal cultures. Like Kymlicka, they recognize that culture is dynamic (contrary to any essentialist position), and that individuals have legitimate aspirations to explore a range of available life paths. Tina, reflecting carefully on Rebecca's comments, explains that she "understand[s] the position being taken"; but she also sympathizes with "those looking for healing in whatever means they can find it." Leslie agrees. Imagining that her children may someday align with the Catholic Church, she remarks that "I would encourage them to be fully aware of the history [of the IRS system] before they made that decision. But would I ever forbid them? Say 'No you cannot practice the Catholic religion.' That's taking away their freedom of choice. I want to raise my daughters to be strong enough to make their own decisions."

While these Aboriginal mothers clearly value individual freedoms, Leslie's concern that her children become "fully aware of the history" encourages caution about Kymlicka's interpretation of intra-minority-group restrictions. The Church, whether Pentecostal, Catholic, or otherwise, does not represent one *neutral* life-course option among many from which Leslie's children may choose. As De Leeuw (2007, 339) argues, IRS were "intimate sites nested within Canadian colonial and nation-building agendas that were predicated on policies of assimilation, enculturation or annihilation of Indigenous people." Accordingly, for Veronica and Rebecca, contemporary faith in Christianity among members of their community is not obviously an expression of autonomous individual selection so much as it may reflect the successful hegemony of an externally enforced faith regime. This regime imposed its will through the unjust relocation of children from their familial and cultural contexts for over a century, and disciplined children physically, sexually, and emotionally, sometimes as punishment for resisting Church teachings. The influence of Christianity may therefore persist, they imply, not so much as a reflection of individual choices, but because its institutions were supported by the Government of Canada to forcibly subvert some norms in favor of imposing others.

Several CII participants thus welcome the opportunity in Aboriginal communities to reflect collectively on the cultural violence formerly inflicted by Church institutions in order to critically evaluate their present influence over the revitalization of some signifiers of Aboriginal cultures. When we recognize that

the IRS system launched an intergenerational assault, we leave open the intellectual space for members of Aboriginal communities to recommend on-reserve limits to Christian practices in order to minimize cultural violence that the Church may continue to perpetrate toward those who aspire for Aboriginal spiritualities as experienced before the IRS system. This interpretation is consistent with Mill's (1975, 10–11) famous harm principle, which asserts that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

Epilogue: To Every Action There Is a Story

The Aboriginal participants in the CII project affirm Kershaw's finding (2010a; 2010b), influenced by Collins (1994), that particular modes of caregiving can be a political act of citizenship. The women of the CII study make clear that caregiving for identity has potential to empower community members to contest existing power structures on behalf of themselves and the broader populations of which they are part. When time to care is resourced at the community and household level in line with the policy recommendations above, "private" caregiving has potential to empower communities because it represents a central context in which Aboriginal parents and community members self-define through story-telling and story-rejecting. Such care provides the context in which Mary rejects the fear her children risk internalizing because denigrating portrayals of Aboriginality persist in public settings. It is the same context in which Jenny invites her children to emulate the resilience their grandmother showed in the face of the IRS system. And recall that it is the context in which Rebecca aspires to know and continues to dig into the contemporary meaning of her cultural identity side-by-side with her children. Their nurturing responses to racism and colonialism—other people's stories about Aboriginals—resemble the biopolitical activities of population propagation that Foucault (1976) envisioned because they are organized in part to strengthen the First Nation(s) of which these caregivers are members. Among the CII sample, Jenny and other mothers in her community more so than René's Nation are turning the tables on the same biopolitical mechanism through which the IRS system aimed "to kill the Indian in the child." Such political activity, a function of caregiving, merits ongoing attention from theorists of power, citizenship, and recognition politics generally. It also represents a cornerstone for the resurgent Indigenous movement called for by Alfred and Corntassel (2005), Coulthard (2007), and others.

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