

Responsibilities of Identity:  
Epistemic Trustworthiness as Resistance to Settler Colonial Domination

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## **Abstract For Master's Research Paper**

Responsibilities of Identity:

Epistemic Trustworthiness as Resistance to Settler Colonial Domination

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I argue that unsatisfying relations of political recognition between the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Turtle Island, and the Canadian state are a product of, and thereby a means of reinforcing and reproducing, hermeneutical domination, a distinct form of epistemic injustice. Remedies for hermeneutical domination require the granting of epistemic trust, which I claim is untenable absent subordinated parties' autonomous assumption of responsibilities that establish their epistemic trustworthiness. Given the logics of elimination that are a defining feature of settler colonial projects, I claim that my approach provides a more effective defense of Indigenous alterities than proposals based on Fanon-inspired notions of 'turning away.'

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Finally, I dedicate this work to my grandmother Ann Dillon, a Kanesatake Mohawk and residential school survivor, and my mother, Sandra, who, upon being invited to attend my defense of this thesis via Zoom, promptly departed for that undiscovered country from whose bourn no wi-fi signal returns. A wise choice but I will miss you nonetheless.

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## Responsibilities of Identity

### Epistemic Trustworthiness as Resistance to Settler Colonial Domination<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

In this paper I draw on contemporary relations between the institutions of the Canadian state (CS) and the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Turtle Island <sup>2</sup> (FNIM) to argue that pathological outcomes of recognition practices are a product of, and thereby a means of reinforcing and reproducing, hermeneutical domination (HD), a distinct form of epistemic injustice. Further, I claim that subordinated parties' autonomous assumption of responsibilities that establish their epistemic trustworthiness is not only a means of rectifying said relationships, but an effective means of resisting the interpellative and assimilative characteristics of settler colonial domination. Given the logics of elimination that are a defining feature of settler colonial projects, I claim that my approach provides a more effective defense of Indigenous alterities than proposals based on Fanon-inspired notions of 'turning away.'

In the first part of this paper, I argue that problematic applications of recognition theory are rendered more intelligible, and the issues they address are therefore more likely to be resolved, when those applications are understood as products of HD, as well as the means by which HD is reinforced and reproduced. Given that remedies for HD call for the granting of epistemic trust to oppressed parties, I then argue that said trust is untenable absent the autonomous assumption of responsibilities that establish the epistemic trustworthiness of the subordinated party. Further, I argue that because said responsibilities define the boundaries of the subordinated party's agency, they are therefore necessary conditions for the subordinated party's functioning as an agent, a robust sense of which is required for dismantling the structures in which the oppression of the subordinated party is grounded. Objections related to 'so-what-ism' and 'victim-blaming,' will be raised and addressed, and I will argue that while participation in practices of recognition poses risks to dominated parties, these must be weighed against the risks posed by alternatives such as 'turning away.' Finally, I conclude that, given the role of eliminatory logics in settler colonial politics, the potential for greater benefits and mitigated harms to FNIM justify those risks. By doing so, I provide an alternative to Coulthard's understanding of recognition policies and propose feasible reforms that promote the flourishing of FNIM individuals and their identities under the recognition paradigm.

1. 'Settler colonialism' is typically distinguished from 'extractive' or imperial colonial relationships by the former's establishment of independent polities, and the prioritization of dispossession of land or territory over the proletarianization of the Indigenous population, both of which ground the 'logics of elimination' that are motivated by settlers' desire to institute themselves as the Indigenous population. Patrick Wolfe (2006) provides a foundational descriptive account, while Lorenzo Veracini (2010, 2011, 2015) argues that the two forms of colonization are sufficiently distinct to be considered different in kind. For a comparative account, see Lucy Taylor (2020), who argues that in settler colonial states of the global south such as Argentina, the lines between extractive and settler colonialism are not as clearly drawn.
2. 'Turtle Island' is the name by which many Indigenous Peoples refer to North America. Also, while I refer to 'First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples' throughout this paper, I wish to acknowledge, at the outset, the diversity of collectives that identify as Indigenous (634 First Nations live on the Canadian territory according to TheCanadianEncyclopedia.com), and their ongoing participation in discussions and other processes dedicated to shaping and defining indigeneity and indigenous identity.

## Background

With the unironically named White Paper of 1969, the Trudeau government proposed to institute a regime of universal liberal rights and equal citizenship for all Canadians, and by so doing, extinguish all of FNIM's existing and future claims to land, sovereignty, and cultural protections.<sup>3</sup> This action provoked an unprecedented political mobilization and unification of FNIM communities, and in response to widespread resistance, the government withdrew the paper and shifted from overtly coercive policies to a paradigm of testimonial interaction based on principles of mutual recognition, reconciliation and transitional justice.<sup>4 5</sup>

The collection of policies and practices that constitutes contemporary political relations between CS and FNIM is widely referred to as 'the politics of recognition.'<sup>6</sup> The general intent of said policies is to reconcile the homogenizing tendencies of liberal rights regimes with the needs of non-privileged populations to have their identities and identity-related rights affirmed.<sup>7</sup> This intention is typically expressed in large-scale, legally mediated exchanges of recognition between a state and marginalised or subordinated groups, and a collection of discursive practices aimed at: preserving the identity, dignity and well-being of marginalized communities; reconciling historical injustices and other identity-related harms; and constructing more just and equitable relations going forward. In the case of FNIM, recognition negotiations and policies have typically involved the delegation of land, capital, and political power from CS to FNIM communities through processes such as land claims, and programs ostensibly intended to develop the economic and political independence of FNIM.<sup>8</sup>

Dale Turner and Glen Sean Coulthard both acknowledge the significant progress that has occurred under the recognition paradigm, while pointing to CS's intransigence on questions of self-determination and nation-to-nation relationships with FNIM.<sup>9 10</sup> Turner argues that any recognition of Indigenous rights in which they are subsumed as minority rights under a liberal framework obscures the ongoing and unjust nature of the colonial relationship, and undermines indigenous identities and self-determination.<sup>11</sup> He proposes a restructuring of the relationship between CS and FNIM, with FNIM taking the role of equal partners (rather than subjects, trustees or consultants) in the construction of the legal, political, and social norms of Canadian society.<sup>12</sup> To this end, he calls for a corps of Indigenous intellectuals or 'word warriors' to be

3. Dale Antony Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), 12.

4. Turner, *Peace Pipe*, 13.

5. I attribute the term "relationships of testimonial interaction" to Heidi Grasswick, "Reconciling Epistemic Trust and Responsibility," in *Trust in Epistemology*, ed. Katherine Dormandy (Routledge, 2019): 168.

6. For a seminal account see: Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* edited by Amy Gutmann (Princeton University Press, 1994): 25-74.

7. Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," 38-39.

8. Glen S Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6, no. 4 (November 1, 2007): 438.

9. Turner, *Peace Pipe*, 78-79.

10. Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (U of Minnesota Press, 2014): 2, 30-31.

11. Turner, *Peace Pipe*, 59.

12. *Ibid.*, 7, 71, 112.

trained to engage the legal, political and philosophical discourses of the Canadian state while remaining grounded in the traditional knowledge, values and practices of their communities.<sup>13</sup>

Coulthard dismisses Turner's account, claiming that he doesn't provide a sufficient explanation of how FNIM are meant to interpolate Indigenous knowledge to the mechanisms of the state without being interpellated by ideologies that are not simply unjust, but an existential threat to Indigenous cultures.<sup>14</sup> He argues that four decades of negotiation under the recognition framework have shown that outcomes inevitably favour the interests of the colonial enterprise, and limit the possibilities for FNIM to constitute identities that do not ultimately serve the interests of CS and its institutions.<sup>15</sup> Among other things, recognition of 'historical' injustices locates them in the past, allowing the state to deny their ongoing nature;<sup>16</sup> recognition of FNIM land claims is conditional on agreements to sell the land or permit exploitation of resources;<sup>17</sup> recognition of FNIM sovereignty is limited to non-traditional forms of 'self-government';<sup>18</sup> and recognition of 'cultural' rights protects superficial aspects of culture while prohibiting any attempts to institute, for example, socio-economic arrangements that are incompatible with capitalist exploitation of natural resources.<sup>19</sup> Further, Coulthard draws on the work of Frantz Fanon to argue that the asymmetrical forms of recognition instituted by dominating colonial regimes such as CS are sustained by the inculcation of psycho-affective attachments that lead to their being normalized and accepted by FNIM.<sup>20</sup> He therefore rejects contemporary recognition practices as inextricably entwined with capitalist worldviews and antithetical to Indigenous self-determination.<sup>21</sup> Rather than participation, he argues for a Fanon-inspired strategy of 'turning away,' by which the labour of FNIM is directed away from processes aimed at formal recognition and toward self-affirmation through an Indigenous 'resurgence,' based on various forms of political and economic resistance, including direct action.<sup>22</sup>

My aim in this paper is to challenge Coulthard's defeatism in regard to the recognition paradigm by demonstrating the role of HD in corrupting relations of testimonial interaction with dominating parties. I argue that HD can and should be remedied by hermeneutically dominated parties' assumption of responsibilities that establish their epistemic trustworthiness. By assuming said responsibilities, subordinated parties do not only impose moral and epistemic obligations on dominating parties but afford themselves robust protections against the interpellative and assimilative mechanisms of hermeneutically dominating parties in general, and contemporary settler colonial states in particular. I thereby reinforce Turner's argument by showing that FNIM's autonomous assumption of responsibilities in regard to its relationship with CS is an effective means of engaging the social, political, and legal systems of CS while constructing the rationally unified identities required for authentic self-determination. Further, I claim that my approach, while drawing on the same assumptions as Coulthard's, is less likely to cause harms and more likely to produce desirable outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

13. *Ibid.*, 7, 119.

14. Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 45-47, 178-179.

15. *Ibid.*, 2, 3, 24, 25-26, 42, 179.

16. *Ibid.*, 22.

17. *Ibid.*, 122-123.

18. *Ibid.*, 67-68.

19. *Ibid.*, 41, 52, 65-66.

20. *Ibid.*, 25-26, 152-153.

21. *Ibid.*, 42, 179.

22. *Ibid.*, 43, 48, 165, 166, 172-173.



## Hermeneutical Domination

The examples that Coulthard cites are not, strictly speaking, misrecognitions, in that they represent, in many cases, affirmative responses to ‘legitimate’ demands from within FNIM communities. To that extent, they are consistent with the principles that ground the recognition framework. They are, nevertheless, problematic. Given that the so-called ‘politics of recognition’ involve relationships of testimonial interaction, it does not seem unreasonable to consider the possibility that these and other pathological outcomes involve some sort of epistemic injustice. In fact, a great deal of recent scholarship has brought together theories of recognition and epistemic injustice with intriguing results.<sup>23</sup> Drawing on the dynamic interplay between these two theories of justice, I argue that demands for recognition in asymmetrical cognitive environments are rendered more intelligible, and therefore more likely to be satisfied, when they are understood as occurring in, and motivated by, circumstances of HD, a distinct form of epistemic injustice.

Amandine Catala defines HD as the form of epistemic injustice that occurs when a minority, or otherwise marginalized group, engages in a public discourse using ostensibly collective meanings and understandings that have been exclusively formulated and instituted by the dominating party.<sup>24</sup> The notion of HD extends existing theory in two important ways, both of which have relevance for this paper. First, although HD originates in acts of what Miranda Fricker has labelled ‘testimonial injustice,’<sup>25</sup> (specifically, when a subjugated party’s attempts to contribute their knowledge and experience to the society’s collective hermeneutic resource are rejected), the resulting situation is one in which the now hermeneutically marginalized party’s testimony is not explicitly rejected but shaped by the existing concepts and interpretations.<sup>26</sup> Second, although Catala draws on theories that require both parties to be aware of domination for it to exist, HD does not necessarily require that either party be aware that they are dominating or dominated.<sup>27</sup>

I propose to extend Catala’s theory by arguing that circumstances of HD not only shape relationships of testimonial interaction, but that under circumstances of HD, affirmative acts of recognition become the prevailing means by which hermeneutical domination is reinforced and reproduced, which is not to say that acts of recognition completely supplant or replace acts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Specifically, my claim is that a group, such as FNIM, that has come to be hermeneutically dominated as a result of repeated acts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, is thereby involved in discussions and negotiations that shape its ways of knowing and understanding, including the available meanings by which it is able to understand

23. Anna Cook (2018), for example, argues that epistemologies of ignorance allow the Canadian state and society to discount not only the severity, but the very existence of injustices recognized by their own Truth and Reconciliation Commission. José Medina (2018) contends that conventional, quantified interpretations of recognition theory inappropriately sensationalize instances of racial violence, obstructing the diagnosis and rectification of systemic oppression by positioning the public as spectators, rather than participants, in systems of communicative and other non-physical forms of oppression in which they may be complicit. Paul Giladi (2018) argues that denying epistemic recognition to a dominated group further entrenches their subordination by constraining their participation in the intersubjective construction of norms that justify their oppression.

24. Amandine Catala, “Democracy, Trust, and Epistemic Justice,” *The Monist* 98, no. 4 (October 2015): 428.

25. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28-29.

26. Catala, “Democracy, Trust, and Epistemic Justice,” 428.

27. *Ibid.*, 431.

itself.<sup>28</sup> The result is a conflict between the group's original or traditional ways of understanding itself and those imposed by (and therefore more 'intelligible' to), the dominating majority. This fracture of identity manifests in conflicting demands from within the same group, which results in situations where the dominating party's affirmative response to demands for recognition from one side (typically, that which it regards as more intelligible) equates to the marginalisation, smothering or silencing of competing or opposing voices, exacerbating domination.<sup>29</sup>

### Epistemic Trust

Catala's proposed remedies for HD require the granting of 'epistemic trust,' by the dominating party, which is to say, the privileging of subordinated parties' accounts on the basis of their 'expertise' in regard to those institutions, practices, and concepts of the larger society that they experience as oppressive.<sup>30</sup> The granting of trust in these cases is justified by the inability of dominating parties to access the experience of oppressed groups. Under these circumstances, distrust of the subordinated group's claims of oppression is unjustified, though it must be noted that suspension of judgement cannot be ruled out without resorting to some form of moral encroachment.<sup>31</sup> Two other important features of epistemic trust and privileging should also be noted. First, while acts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice can occur at the individual and group level, epistemic trust is granted to individuals' testimony only insofar as it is representative of the group's experience or standpoint.<sup>32</sup> Second, epistemic privileging does not entail unconditional acceptance of the oppressed party's account.<sup>33</sup> Rather, the granting of trust is warranted by objective criteria of legitimacy and accountability that Catala claims are fulfilled by the group's standpoint, which presumes, in turn, their "fundamental commitment to social justice and hence an interest in not concealing what runs counter to it."<sup>34</sup> The burden of justification is thus shifted from the party that claims to be oppressed to the party that would deny the claim.<sup>35</sup>

I will now engage with the notion of epistemic trust, and after interrogating the relationship between trust and responsibility, argue that the autonomous assumption of responsibilities that establish the epistemic trustworthiness of subordinated parties' claims of oppression is an effective means of rectifying unsatisfactory relationships of testimonial

28. For a more complete account of identities as available meanings, the process by which individuals define and understand themselves, and the obligations of liberal societies to preserve these meanings, see Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," and Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995).

29. For an account of how state recognition policies marginalize voices within communities, see Clarissa Rile Hayward and Ron Watson, "Identity Politics and Democratic Nondomination," *Contemporary Political Theory* 16 (May 1, 2017): 190.

30. Catala, 'Democracy, Trust and Epistemic Justice,' 432.

31. Although I intuited this question of suspended judgement, I thank Jordan Walters for introducing me to the term 'moral encroachment' and the associated literature. For more on moral encroachment, see James Fritz, "Moral Encroachment and Reasons of the Wrong Kind" *Philosophical Studies* 177, no. 10 (October 2020): 3051-3070.

32. I thank Amandine Catala for clarifying this aspect of her standpoint theory-based argument at a talk in January 2021.

33. Catala, Democracy, Trust and Epistemic Justice, 437.

34. *Ibid.*, 435.

35. Note that claims of oppression do not have to be denied outright; the causal link between the institution or practice and the oppression could also be denied or questioned.

interaction with dominating parties, and preferable to strategies that reject the recognition framework altogether.

Assuming that trust and responsibility bear some sort of relationship to each other, I will now explore three configurations that appear to capture the most plausible views of the relationship between a dominating party's trust and the responsibilities of a subordinated party: trust imposes no responsibilities on the trustee; trust imposes or activates the trustee's responsibilities; and trust is compelled by the subordinated party's autonomous assumption of responsibilities related to epistemic trustworthiness.<sup>36</sup>

### **Trust without Responsibility**

To claim that trust can or must be granted to a party with no normative expectations is problematic on many levels.<sup>37</sup> First, it assumes that the notion of trust is completely captured by the affective or doxastic attitude taken by the truster. This 'reliance' view of trust describes the perspective of someone who, for example, trusts the gas gauge in their car, or perhaps trusts that a janitor will mop their office floor but only because they have always done so in the past.<sup>38</sup> Reliance views fail to hold the trustee accountable and therefore amount to a denial of their agency and fundamental human dignity. To exclude the possibility that the testifier may be culpably mistaken or deceitful is to treat them, in Fricker's terms, as an object, rather than a subject of knowledge, as a source of information rather than a good informant.<sup>39</sup> By this reasoning, trust without responsibility amounts to no more, and no better than, an inversion or overcorrection of testimonial injustice.

It may not be immediately clear how accepting or privileging the content of a testifier's statements may be dominating, especially in cases where the intent is to undo or counteract the testifier's oppression. Consider, however, that accepting testimony solely on the basis of the testifier's socially subordinated status denies them full moral agency. Views of trust that include no normative expectations can therefore only extend or exacerbate domination.

### **Trust imposes Responsibility**

When fully realized, the trust relationship can be regarded as a form of mutual recognition.<sup>40</sup> There are, however, several views of trust that, while acknowledging its reciprocal nature, are nevertheless problematic, and particularly so in situations of domination, as the views in question invariably discount the agency of the trusted party. First, consider the possibility that the act of counting on someone obliges them to respond in kind.<sup>41</sup> This is captured by the sense

36. This seems as good a time as any to point out that my argument here does not, in any way, absolve or diminish the responsibilities of the dominating party. They exist and they are important, they are just not the focus of this paper.

37. There are two senses in which trust can be 'granted.' The first, which I am arguing against, is the sense that attributes the predominant agency to the granting or trusting party. The latter denotes an acknowledgement that the granting party's trust has been compelled by some external agency. My argument involves the second type of granting.

38. Karen Jones, "Trustworthiness," *Ethics* 123, no. 1 (October 2012): 65.

39. Miranda Fricker, "Group Testimony? The Making of A Collective Good Informant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 84, no. 2 (March 2012): 8-9.

40. Gloria Origgi, "Is Trust an Epistemological Notion?," *Episteme* 1, no. 1 (2004): 61.

41. Jones, "Trustworthiness," 79. I am aware of arguments that the act of testimony is, in itself, an invitation to trust and even carries an inherent claim of trustworthiness. I leave that debate aside for now, though it is a relevant concern for my argument. In brief, I note that these views do not address the possibility of

of betrayal an uninvited or manipulative truster expresses when they exclaim: ‘But I trusted you!’ Most would agree that this imposition is as legitimate as the demands of an unrequited lover, which is to say, not at all. ‘Assurance’ views grant trust on the assumption that testimony carries an inherent promise or commitment that warrants its belief.<sup>42</sup> A distinguishing feature of these views is the ‘buck-passing,’ that allows the truster to assign justificatory responsibilities to the trustee in the event that the belief is challenged.<sup>43</sup> ‘Empowerment’ views of trust argue that the attitude taken by the truster imposes normative expectation and thereby activates or reinforces the trustee’s ‘standing disposition’ to be trusted.<sup>44</sup> Again, the paternalistic nature of these views undermines, diminishes or denies the agency and dignity of the trusted party and thereby exacerbates, or at least does nothing to diminish, conditions of domination, hermeneutic or otherwise.

### **Autonomous Trustworthiness**

I will now show that in relationships of testimonial interaction, the autonomous assumption of trustworthiness-related responsibilities by oppressed parties compels the trust of the dominating party on epistemic as well as moral grounds. First, some definitions: Karen Jones offers the following account of ‘rich’ trustworthiness:

B is trustworthy with respect to A in domain of interaction D, if and only if she is competent with respect to that domain, and she would take the fact that A is counting on her, were A to do so in this domain, to be a compelling reason for acting as counted on.

This is not the whole story of trustworthiness, however, for we want those we can count on to identify themselves so that we can place our trust wisely.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, for an agent to be richly trustworthy, they must signal that they are responsible, which is to say, that they can be reasonably expected to respond positively to the needs of a party, were that party to count on them. ‘Counting on’ describes a reciprocal but asymmetrical relation in that the truster is dependent on the trustee for goods that the truster presumably lacks and wishes to acquire or make use of.<sup>46</sup> In the case of epistemic trustworthiness, the goods in question are epistemic goods, which include not only knowledge and ways of knowing, but importantly for this argument, *reasons to count on something or someone as a source of knowledge*.<sup>47</sup> Trustworthiness can therefore be regarded as a non-epistemic desideratum that secures or stabilizes the credibility and truthfulness of otherwise precarious epistemic elements.<sup>48</sup> It is also important to note the relationship between the epistemic trustworthiness of certain epistemic goods, for example, testimonial evidence, and the epistemic trustworthiness of the agents, collective and otherwise, who provide them. It does not

what I call ‘epistemic bullying’ a term I may have invented and hope to write a paper on in the near future.

42. Philip J. Nickel, “Assurance Views of Testimony,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Social Epistemology*, ed. Miranda Fricker, Peter J. Graham, David Henderson, and Nikolaj J. L. L. Pederson (New York: Routledge 2020), 96.
43. Nickel, “Assurance Views,” 97.
44. Victoria McGeer, “Trust, Hope and Empowerment,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, no.2 (May 2008): 241-242.
45. Jones, “Trustworthiness,” 61.
46. Jones, “Trustworthiness,” 64-65.
47. Catherine Z. Elgin, “Trustworthiness,” *Philosophical Papers* 37, no. 3 (November 1, 2008): 375, 381.
48. Elgin, “Trustworthiness,” 378.

seem contentious to claim that agents may establish and enhance their epistemic trustworthiness by engaging in practices that establish the trustworthiness of their evidence.

The asymmetrical nature of the trust relation is further established by the fact that trustworthiness includes within its definition some notion of desert. It would be wrong, by definition, to distrust a trustworthy person, which is to say, trustworthiness includes both evaluative and descriptive elements within its conception, whereas, as shown above, trust does not, at least not as strongly or as obviously as trustworthiness does.<sup>49</sup> This, however, raises the question of whether or not it is wrong to simply not trust (in the sense of withholding trust rather than distrusting), a trustworthy person, as for example, in the case of a trustworthy banker or surgeon whose services I do not require.

One way to answer this question is to show that in relationships of testimonial interaction, it can be justifiably assumed that both parties have interests that are served by their communicating with each other. In the case of CS and FNIM, a compelling interest is acknowledged, to cite one example among many, in the introduction to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples final report: '(First Nations) are important to Canada and how Canada relates to them defines in large measure its sense of justice and its image in its own eyes and before the world.'<sup>50</sup>

On the basis of these and similar statements, it is reasonable to assume that CS and any other institution that claims to have an interest in being or becoming just, has an interest in acquiring knowledge that relates to oppressive aspects of its policies and practices, including the ways in which subordinated parties experience those policies as oppressive. In cases such as that of CS and FNIM, said knowledge would likely depend on testimony and other evidence that existing relations of testimonial interaction are themselves dominating or oppressive, and how they are so. This interest in defining itself as just constrains the possibility of CS dismissing or ignoring the testimony of FNIM communities that have established their epistemic trustworthiness by providing CS with reasons to count on them as a source of knowledge. By withholding trust, CS would not only fail to meet its own standards of justice, but more objective principles of epistemic responsibility.<sup>51</sup>

### **Logics of Elimination**

It is important to point out, however, that in many cases, the interests of dominating institutions might be equally or better served by the non-existence of subjects and identities that conflict with their agendas. Given their involvement in hermeneutically dominating processes of recognition, settler colonial logics of elimination must therefore be taken as a real and relevant concern.

Briefly, settler colonial projects and relationships are distinguished from what are sometimes described as 'imperial,' or 'extractive,' colonial projects by the establishment of independent polities, and their prioritization of the displacement and dispossession of colonized peoples over the exploitation of their labour.<sup>52</sup> Whether through genocidal or assimilative policies, settler colonial projects aim to eliminate and supplant Indigenous populations, and by so

49. Elgin, 'Trustworthiness,' 372-373.

50. Canada. *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996): 6.

51. Elgin, 'Trustworthiness,' 376.

52. Lorenzo Veracini, 'Introducing: Settler Colonial Studies,' *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2011): 2.

doing, extinguish their own settler colonial status.<sup>53</sup> This inclination of settler colonialism to ‘cover its tracks,’ as Lorenzo Veracini has eloquently described it, manifests in the tendency of settler colonial institutions to ‘invisibilize’ Indigenous alterities and ultimately, their own inherently unjust origins and natures.<sup>54</sup>

Given the above, it is hard to see how withholding labour or ‘turning away’ from (admittedly non-ideal) relations of mutual recognition does not play right into the hands of settler colonial states and their defintory logics of elimination. Alternatively, interacting with settler colonial institutions in ways that robustly establish and reinforce the visibility and thereby the survival of Indigenous alterities, while not entirely risk-free, would seem to offer a far greater potential for promising outcomes. FNIM labour should therefore be aimed at achieving significant and meaningful participation in the construction and development of the social, political, and legal norms of the dominating state and society. A desirable response to hermeneutically dominating relationships of testimonial interaction would therefore not only establish the trustworthiness and expertise of FNIM in regard to the oppressive nature of CS’s recognition practices but reinforce the existence of meaningful FNIM identities while doing so, and ideally, oblige the state to ensure the ongoing existence of, and the right to self-determination of, said identity groups.

I claim, then, that in regard to demands for recognition from subordinated parties, the assumption of responsibilities that establish their trustworthiness as collective informants, does not only compel the trust of the dominating party on epistemic and moral grounds, but provides a robust defense against the interpellative and assimilative features of contemporary settler colonial relations. To that end, I propose three mutually supportive and mutually constitutive categories of responsibility, and a model of collective agency that, when assumed by subordinated parties, establish and reinforce their trustworthiness as collective informants, increase their agency, and provide an effective means of resistance to the interpellative and assimilative tendencies of dominating parties. The categories I propose align, in a rough way, with the aforementioned conditions for rich trustworthiness, and can also be read as responses to three questions that I claim are required for any demand, and in particular, demands for political recognition, to be meaningful: Who is asking? Why are they asking? and What are they asking for?<sup>55</sup>

### **Responsibilities of Identity (Who is asking?)**

It seems inarguable that a necessary condition for A’s counting on B is that A knows who B is, and that this depends, in turn, on B knowing who B is, or in other words, on B having an established and continuous identity that it has signalled to A. In the case of collective identities, as both product and process, a defining component is the sense of ‘we-ness’ that originates in attributes or experiences that are shared by the individuals who constitute the collective, and by

53. Veracini, ‘Settler Colonial Studies,’ 3.

54. Ibid., 3. Also, Although I had come up with the term ‘invisibilize’ on my own and use it because it suggests obvious strategies for resistance that ‘erasure’ and ‘elimination’ do not, it has now come to my attention that, unsurprisingly, other writers, for example, Lucy Taylor and Yann Allard-Tremblay, use this term in a similar way.

55. I acknowledge that demands for recognition also imply an important set of questions related to the target of the demand, i.e., Who is being asked? etc. I leave these aside in order to focus on the topic at hand.

which they contrast or differentiate their collective ‘self’ from that of an ‘other’ or ‘others.’<sup>56</sup> It does not seem particularly contentious to argue that a robust or meaningful sense of collective identity also depends on a shared sense that the collective may have interests that can be distinguished from those of the individual constituents of the group, and further, that there is a possibility of collective action in pursuit of those interests, which is to say, group agency.<sup>57</sup> It should also be noted that, in the case of ethnocultural identity groups such as FNIM, there is a characteristic assumption that the group, as a collective ‘self,’ has interests in its own existence that surpass or exceed the existence of the individuals who, at any point, constitute the physical representation of the group, and its directly instrumental value to those constituents.

It follows from the above that robust collective identities are developed and maintained by activities that define and shape the interests of the collective and enhance the real possibilities for pursuing those interests. Given that group agency implies group responsibility, I argue that for an individual to claim an identity, to the extent that said identity is self-attributed, is to assume obligations related to the definition and pursuit of the group’s interests.

In cases such as that of FNIM, in which a dominating institution constitutes the principal opposition to the pursuit of said interests, the construction and maintenance of robust collective identities therefore requires activity that not only distinguishes the interests of the group from those of the individuals and sub-groups that are its constituents, but importantly, from the interests of internal and external agencies that restrict or constrain its possibilities of pursuing and fulfilling its own interests. Claiming a collective identity would therefore seem to oblige individual claimants to participate in activities that define, shape, and maintain the distinct interests of the group, and defend those interests in situations where they conflict with the interests of internal and external agencies. The question of how internal and external agencies and their interests may be differentiated from those of the identity group, particularly in situations where it is necessary to distinguish shared interests from those that have been imposed through hermeneutically dominating processes of testimonial interaction will be addressed further below.

It should be apparent that assumption or assignment of responsibility for these fundamental aspects of collective identification and self-determination by any external agency is rendered implausible by the morally untenable conditions of domination or servility this would imply. It would be arrogant and insensitive, not to mention inconsistent with the arguments presented in this paper, to dictate the precise terms and procedures by which FNIM, or any identity group, are to determine and enact their collective identities and interests. It does seem, however, that fundamental aspects of identity and identity-related responsibilities may be practically realized through activities such as, for example, establishing criteria for inclusion to, and exclusion from, the group,<sup>58</sup> establishing procedures for managing disputes within the

56. D.A. Snow, ‘Collective Identity and Expressive Forms,’ in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier, 2001), 2215.

57. Snow., ‘Collective Identity,’ 2215.

58. This raises an important question of whether or not different responsibilities of identity, or different degrees of responsibility, apply to those who have the option of claiming or not claiming an identity, as opposed to those who are denied this option by, for example, racial or other markers, or classification by governments or other dominating authorities. The contemporary political and social reality of FNIM is that there is minimal resistance to those who choose not to claim FNIM identities. Ideally, all identities should be freely chosen rather than attributed, but obviously this is not the case.

group,<sup>59</sup> deciding who can speak for, or otherwise represent, the group to external agencies, and determining what degree and forms of interaction with other agents constitutes its ideal. Much of the above depends, in turn, on what type of agent an identity group determines itself to be,<sup>60</sup> which determines, in turn, the nature of its responsibilities, and how these are distributed to those agents who are regarded as constituents of the group. These issues will be addressed below, where I will draw on recent scholarship to argue that identity groups are best served by a view that treats groups as rationally unified agents.

### **Responsibilities of Testimony (Why are they asking?)**

It can be argued that awareness of basic human dignity and its value arises most readily from those instances and occasions that indicate its lack, which is to say, actions that are perceived as insulting or disrespectful.<sup>61</sup> It follows, then, that a group's demands for social and political recognition are ultimately motivated by actions that intentionally or unintentionally disrespect the group, or the individual constituents of the group, on the basis of their collective identity.<sup>62</sup> It would seem, therefore, that collective awareness that a policy or practice of a superordinated party is disrespectful prefigures any demand for political recognition, including demands to reform existing recognition policies.

The process by which groups become collectively aware of identity-related harms – i.e., ‘consciousness-raising’ – relies on three basic components: that individuals are aware that they share some distinguishing trait or attribute; that they share a common experience; and importantly, that they have come to have that experience *by virtue* of the aforementioned trait or attribute.<sup>63</sup> In many cases, the process of consciousness-raising may also require, and therefore promote, the development of conceptual resources by which the group is able to name and communicate its experience to itself and others.<sup>64</sup>

As noted earlier, competence in a relevant domain is a necessary condition for trustworthiness. Any collective informant seeking to establish their trustworthiness in relationships of testimonial interaction is therefore required to demonstrate their competence in

59. I would like to thank Dr. Gilibert for drawing my attention to this important aspect of group identification. It is particularly relevant to Indigenous people's processes of decolonization and self-determination which, while typically calling for a resurgence of traditional values and practices, acknowledge the need for processes by which to engage with modernity while ensuring the ongoing vitality and evolution of their culture(s).

60. Clearly, there exist many cases where an identity group cannot be said to determine itself, and no group could, or would be able to, exclusively determine itself, but cases and contexts where a group is ‘fixed’ by an external agency are so obviously dominating that I set them aside to deal with the more subtle and seemingly benign forms of domination that are more prevalent in settler than extractive colonialism and the focus of this paper. As mentioned, in extractive colonialism, the need for a permanent class of colonized labourers produces identities that are ‘fixed,’ by the dominating party, whereas the need of settler colonial regimes to invisibilize and assimilate Indigenous populations results in identities that are far more easily relinquished.

61. Axel Honneth, “Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition,” *Political Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1992): 188.

62. Nick Bromell. ‘Democratic Indignation: Black American Thought and the Politics of Dignity.’ *Political Theory* 41, no. 2 (2013): 303.

63. Briana Toole, ‘From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression,’ *Hypatia* 34, no. 4 (2019): 604, 607.

64. Toole, ‘Standpoint Epistemology,’ 608-609.



regard to the domain in which they demand recognition. I claim that by assuming responsibility for the trustworthiness of their testimony and other evidence of identity-related harms, subordinated parties establish their competence or ‘expertise’ in regard to identifying those practices of superordinated parties that are disrespectful, and therefore oppressive, and by so doing, establish their own trustworthiness as collective informants. Further, I claim that the processes by which testimony and other evidence of identity-related harms are collected and verified reinforce the collective identity by raising awareness of oppressive practices, and therefore, are a fundamental and necessary requirement for resisting internal and external oppression, especially in situations where logics of elimination and assimilation are a concern.

My claim, in full, is that subordinated parties may establish their trustworthiness and thereby compel the trust of dominating parties by assuming responsibilities that enhance the trustworthiness of their evidence, and that said responsibilities are realized by engagement in activities that ensure the epistemically responsible solicitation, collection, and verification of testimony and other evidence of identity-related harms. In addition to establishing the trustworthiness of collective informants such as FNIM, the recursive and reflexive aspects of engaging in said activities have catalytic effects that are likely to result in substantive reinforcement of the group’s identity and agency in ways that are not the case when trust is granted unilaterally, unconditionally, or solely on the basis of the epistemic inaccessibility of the subordinated party’s socially situated knowledge. It is therefore the case that the labour that establishes the trustworthiness of subordinated parties involved in relations of testimonial interaction is also an effective and desirable means of resisting the interpellative and eliminative forces of dominating parties.

Again, while it would be inappropriate to dictate the precise means and methods by which responsibilities related to testimony are enacted, it does not seem controversial to argue that activities that establish the epistemic trustworthiness of the group’s testimony and other evidence by rendering it less precarious are a desirable means by which the trust of dominating parties can be compelled. The reliability and dependability of testimony can be reinforced by demonstrations of epistemic responsibility such as, for example, the testifying party’s institution of processes that ensure the solicitation and recording of truthful testimony, procedures for collectively reflecting on and interpreting the meaning of the accumulated testimony, and procedures of self-monitoring and self-policing that ensure truthful and accurate representations of the collective experience.<sup>65</sup>

### **Responsibilities of Engagement** (What are they asking for?)

A further condition for agents seeking to establish their trustworthiness is the ‘signalling’ of their identity, competence, and willingness to be counted on to the party whose trust they seek. In regard to demands for recognition, and unsatisfying responses to those demands in particular, signalling is enacted through activities that, in addition to those that establish identity and competence, make visible the subordinated party’s commitments to communicate the grievances that have motivated their demands, propose satisfying remedies, and express their willingness to engage in mutually respectful deliberations.<sup>66</sup>

Signalling and communication are, in turn, determined by the degree to which they are received and understood by the parties at which they are directed. Intelligibility is therefore a key

65. Fricker, “Collective Informant,” 14, 27-28.

66. The question of how ‘respectful’ deliberations are defined may itself require deliberation.

concern, particularly in the case of relations between CS and FNIM, where epistemologies of ignorance and other structural instruments have played a significant role in CS's dismissal of FNIM demands as, for example, 'gobbledygook.'<sup>67</sup> Turner, citing Kymlicka, raises the issue of intelligibility not only as a means of facilitating cross-cultural dialogue, but as essential for engaging the legal and political mechanisms of CS that the latter argues provide the most substantive defense of FNIM alterities.<sup>68</sup> Turner offers a practical solution to problems of intelligibility, proposing that Indigenous intellectuals, or 'word warriors,' acquire the expertise needed to engage with the institutions of the state while remaining firmly grounded in Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing.<sup>69</sup> Responsibilities of engagement therefore include activities that encourage and facilitate, rather than obstruct, intelligibility and communication.

A complete account of how standards of intelligibility are defined, by what authority, and how conflicting standards might be resolved is complex and beyond the scope of this paper, but it does not seem unreasonable to assume that engagement in activities related to self-identification and verification of group testimony reinforces and enhances the self-understanding of the subordinated group, including its understanding of its relationship to other parties. This enhanced self-understanding is, in turn, likely to enhance the group's ability to communicate with external parties.

Intelligibility is a two-way street, however, and assumption of responsibilities by subordinated parties does not, in any way, exempt dominating parties from the basic norms of communicative action that underwrite their commitments to relations of testimonial interaction.<sup>70</sup> In circumstances of extreme disparity, said norms could oblige dominating and subordinated parties to participate in the construction of mutually acceptable standards of intelligibility. More plausibly, in the event that the concepts and meanings of the subordinated party are dismissed as unintelligible, various mechanisms involving imaginary or actual external perspectives might be applied to determine whether or not the dismissals are legitimate. In cases where they are not legitimate due to, for example, outright hostility or epistemologies of ignorance, I claim that assuming the responsibility to address the dominating party in terms that they cannot reasonably claim to misunderstand by, for example, employing standards that they apply to themselves is an effective strategy for communicating grievances and dismantling structures of hermeneutical domination.

### **Collective Responsibility and Rational Unity**

I have argued that the assumption and enactment of the above responsibilities by a subordinated group constitutes a form of self-determination that compels the dominating party to acknowledge not only the epistemic trustworthiness and moral standing of a group seeking to repair corrupt relations of testimonial interaction, but also reinforces the subordinated group's existence as an entity with substantive rights claims against the dominating party. An important consequence of this argument is that failure to fulfill the above may, in some cases, justify the

67. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 69. See also: Anna Cook, "Recognizing Settler Ignorance in the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (2018): 1, 15.

68. Turner, *Peace Pipe*, 58, 73.

69. *Ibid.*, 119.

70. Melissa Zinkin, "Habermas on Intelligibility," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 36, no.3 (1998): 463, 465-466.

dominating party's claims that demands are incoherent or unintelligible and provide grounds for those demands being discounted, dismissed, or ignored.

The responsibilities described above are *prima facie* collective in nature. As such, they rest on assumptions that there are such things as group agents, and that the boundaries of their agency are determined by their responsibilities. The question of whether or not collective entities can be regarded as agents and held accountable is far from settled, as is the question of whether or not, and if so, to what extent, individual human beings can be held responsible for the actions of collective entities of which they are constituents. These questions depend, in turn, on analysis and evaluation of the type of collective involved and the structure of relations between the fundamental elements from which the collectivity is constituted.<sup>71</sup> Further, in the case of FNIM, there is a live debate about the nature of Indigenous identity, how it is attributed, and what rights it bestows.<sup>72</sup> There is a vast and complex literature dedicated to all of these interesting and important questions, which unfortunately, are beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, this discussion is not complete without a brief account of the type of responsibilities discussed here, how they might be assumed by FNIM in particular, by subordinated groups involved in relations of testimonial interaction with dominating parties more generally, and the means by which responsibilities assumed by the collective distribute to the individual agents who instantiate the collective at any given time.

As I have argued above, hermeneutically dominated relations of recognition tend to have divisive effects on the formation of collective identities.<sup>73</sup> It does not seem unreasonable to assume that processes that 'divide and conquer' at the level of identity may be effectively resisted by processes that unify, or reunify, said identities.<sup>74</sup> In terms of responsibilities, it should also be mentioned that the situation of ethnocultural identity groups such as FNIM is better captured by models based on narrative coherence than by those based on random or arbitrary collections of individuals, or by teleological accounts that ground the formation of collectives in the pursuit of common interests or goals.<sup>75</sup>

In a recent paper, Carol Rovane draws on reductionist accounts of identity and agency to promote a view of collective responsibility that treats groups as individuals.<sup>76</sup> In short, Rovane argues that, just as the identity and agency of an individual human being is constituted from a collection of competing and often contradictory thoughts and actions, group agents may be similarly constituted from the collected intentional activities of their 'human-sized' constituents to the extent that these are concerned with the distinct interests and point of view of the group rather than the interests of the individuals that, in more conventional views, are regarded as its 'members.'<sup>77</sup>

71. Peter A. French, "Types of Collectives and Responsibilities," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Responsibility*, ed. Saba Bazargan-Forward and Deborah Tollefsen (New York: Routledge, 2020): 14-16.
72. Hilary N. Weaver, 'Indigenous Identity: What Is It, and Who Really Has It?,' *American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2001): 240.
73. See pg. 5 of this paper.
74. I thank Dr. Pablo Gilabert for this succinct description of my claim in regard to fractured identities.
75. French, "Types of Collectives and Responsibilities," 13, 14-17.
76. Carol Rovane, "What Sets the Boundaries of Our Responsibility?: Lessons from a Reductionist Account of Individual Agency," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Responsibility*, ed. Saba Bazargan-Forward and Deborah Tollefsen (New York: Routledge, 2020), 52.
77. Rovane, "Boundaries," 53.

This way of understanding and attributing agency and responsibility to groups as ‘individuals,’ with their own interests, rather than as collections of individual interests, is in many aspects, well-suited to the arguments presented here. This paper cannot explore all the subtleties and implications of Rovane’s view, but what is most salient for this argument is the notion that group identity, agency, and responsibilities can be effectively defined by an approach that views the group as a distinct entity that thinks and acts from its own point of view. This perspective is achieved through engagement in unifying projects that collect the thoughts and actions of involved parties, to the extent that these prioritize the interests of the group, and then commits to ‘all things considered’ deliberations, judgements, and intentional activities by which the group defines itself as a ‘rational unity.’<sup>78</sup>

Rovane argues that ‘backward-looking’ responsibilities for the actions of a group can only be attributed to the group itself, with no remainder distributed to the individual human beings whose thoughts and actions constitute the group’s identity and agency. While this part of her argument raises as many questions as it resolves, one immediate and reasonable implication of the model is that individuals who identify as FNIM can only be said to *be* FNIM to the extent that their thoughts and actions prioritize the interests of the group and commitments to its unifying projects.<sup>79</sup> While I acknowledge that this inference is contentious and likely to be regarded as problematic, as of this writing, I see no more reasonable alternative.<sup>80</sup>

## Objections and Responses

I have argued that CS’s affirmative responses to demands for recognition hermeneutically dominate by smothering or stifling opposing and competing voices and demands from within FNIM communities, and that FNIM can effectively resist hermeneutical domination by assuming and enacting responsibilities by which they constitute themselves as epistemically trustworthy rational unities.

I will now address two objections that are likely to be raised in response to my argument. First is the challenge that what I have presented in this paper is a sort of ideal theory that gains whatever normative force it has from the assumption that a dominating party will respond positively to intelligible moral and epistemic obligations imposed by its subordinated counterpart.<sup>81</sup> In a non-ideal scenario, which is admittedly well-grounded by, for example, CS’s historical mistreatment of FNIM, the dominating party or state might simply say ‘So what?’ and refuse to acknowledge the epistemic and moral obligations imposed by FNIM’s establishment of itself as an epistemically trustworthy rational unity. In such a scenario, wouldn’t Coulthard’s proposed strategy of blockades, sit-ins, threats of violence, and other politically motivated direct-action be a more effective strategy for gaining concessions from CS?<sup>82</sup>

78. Rovane, “Boundaries,” 54-55.

79. For an account that captures most, if not all, of my inference, see: Robert B. Brandom, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-consciousness and Self-Constitution,” in *Recognition and Social Ontology*, ed. Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 28.

80. If I am permitted to continue my studies, these questions of identity and indigeneity are likely to be a central concern.

81. I thank Dr. Pablo Gilabert for raising this challenge when I presented my work at the 2020-21 conference for CRE scholarship recipients.

82. Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 118, 166, 179.

While it cannot be denied that CS's past treatment of FNIM communities is an historical disgrace, its current commitments, as expressed in documents such as the 1982 Constitution Act, and its stated desire to be recognized as just by other nations, imposes significant constraints on its ability to dismiss or ignore objectively reasonable and intelligible demands from FNIM, as does its repeatedly stated commitment to relations based on mutual recognition, reconciliation and sharing in various official documents. In other words, the above does not necessarily rule out a return to the policies of fraud, force and theft that have characterized CS's relationship to FNIM in the past but justifying said policies under the current paradigm would require a reformulation, if not a total rejection, of the fundamental values, principles, commitments, and political philosophies on which CS bases its core identity, and relations to its citizens and other nations.

It must also be pointed out that the plausibility and effectiveness of Coulthard's proposed strategy of direct action and potentially violent confrontation relies on expectations that are equally grounded in the aforementioned constraints, which raises a further, and perhaps stronger, point. Coulthard's claim is that the overwhelming political, economic, legal, media, and military power of the Canadian government and its institutions makes it impossible for FNIM to engage in testimonial relations with the state without being shaped as unjustly subordinated subjects.<sup>83</sup> It would seem then, that if I accept his claim, he is obliged to explain how blockades and sit-ins are likely to be more effective against that same constellation of overwhelming power.

Coulthard, following Fanon, assumes that there are psychologically emancipatory effects produced by the act of resistance itself, and that these will contribute to the increased class-consciousness of Indigenous peoples.<sup>84</sup> I contend that his point can be conceded while arguing that my approach is capable of achieving equally plausible results with decreased risks of harm to Indigenous people.

A second objection involves what is sometimes referred to as 'victim-blaming,' or in more specific terms, the imposition of undue, and therefore unjust, burdens on parties that are already subject to domination and other injustices. I will offer a multi-faceted response to this objection. First, it should be clear that the responsibilities proposed here are predominantly forward-looking and positive, proactive rather than reactive.<sup>85</sup> As such, they are more concerned with engagement in creative or catalytic activities than the distribution of blame for failing to do so. It should also be clear that the central concern of this paper is the definition and defense of FNIM identities in the face of hermeneutically dominating practices and policies of recognition and reconciliation. Given the persistent operation of settler colonial logics of elimination, it is not an exaggeration to say that assumption of the described responsibilities is a matter of survival for FNIM. In regard to attributing blame, then, the sad fact is that the failure to develop and maintain a meaningful sense of FNIM identity means that there will simply be no one left to blame.

Given the above, and conceding that my position nevertheless implies some element of backward-looking responsibility, I turn to the question of whether or not it imposes unjust

83. Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 47, 179.

84. Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 44-45.

85. For more on positive and forward-looking collective responsibilities, see: Marion Smiley, "Future-Looking Collective Responsibility: A Preliminary Analysis," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 38 (2014): 1-11. And Carole Rovane, "Forward-Looking Collective Responsibility: A Metaphysical Reframing of the Issue," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 38 (2014): 12-25.

burdens on the oppressed. To the extent that the responsibilities described above are rightfully interpreted as burdens, two conditions must be fulfilled to establish necessary and sufficient grounds to justify their assumption by oppressed parties. First, it must be shown that these responsibilities are necessary, and second, that they cannot justifiably be assumed by, or imposed on, some other party. To the extent that said conditions are met, assumption of the aforementioned responsibilities by subordinated parties cannot be unjust. I contend that this paper has demonstrated that assumption of these responsibilities is necessary for the maintenance of FNIM identity, as well as the implausibility of their being assumed or enacted by external parties, which is not to exempt dominating parties from their own obligations to, for example, facilitate, or at least not interfere in, subordinated parties' processes of self-definition and self-determination.

Regarding self-determination, it is important to note that for many Indigenous peoples, the responsibilities proposed in this paper may be better described as opportunities than as burdens. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars such as Iris Marion Young, for example, have argued that models of self-determination based on nondomination offer far greater emancipatory potential than more conventional approaches that promote non-interference, separation or sovereign independence.<sup>86</sup> These relational views acknowledge realities of interdependence and encourage the full and equal participation of peoples and nations in the construction and maintenance of the institutions that regulate their relations with each other.<sup>87</sup> Given that the responsibilities I have described aim specifically at facilitating intercultural relations and dismantling structures of domination more generally, nothing I have proposed is inconsistent with these compelling, and frankly, more realistic, views.

A related, but more abstract point, based on the fundamental geometry of recognition theory, is that responsibilities are the simple fact in which the possibility of any moral relation is grounded. To clarify, while a subject may assume moral obligations toward an other without imposing corresponding expectations or obligations on that other (think, for example, of a non-reflective being or non-human animal), it is simply incoherent for a subject to recognize something as the type of thing to which it can address moral claims without recognizing itself as the type of thing to which moral claims can be addressed and to which it is obliged to respond – i.e., responsible.<sup>88</sup> When all is said and done, any process that denies or absolves the responsibilities of either party to a discussion therefore denies them due respect as fully human beings, and by so doing, undermines their agency, self-respect and the possibility of their making or responding to any moral demand.

A final response addresses the question of whether or not assumption of the responsibilities described here is consistent with the traditions and values of FNIM. A fundamental principle that distinguishes FNIM and most Indigenous cultures from their counterparts is 'respect' for land, not only as a material resource, but as a complex, non-anthropocentric and inclusive system of relations between all beings.<sup>89</sup> This respect is expressed

86. Iris Marion Young, "Two concepts of self-determination," in *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Minority Rights*, ed. Stephen May, Tariq Modood and Judith Squires (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176-177, 186.

87. Young, "Two concepts," 182 Also I thank Dr. Ulf Hlobil for a prolonged discussion about the notion of sovereignty implied by my argument.

88. Brandom, "Desire and Recognition," 135, 136, 138, 139-140.

89. Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 60-61.

in a deep awareness that survival depends on attention to, and universal consideration of, one's surroundings.<sup>90</sup> Though not explicitly normative, an important implication of FNIM ethea is that no part of the physical and spiritual landscape can be devalued or ignored. If this traditional notion of a landscape is expanded to include the social and intellectual contexts in which FNIM are situated, to reject or turn away from unsatisfying relations of recognition is, to some extent, to deny or ignore the reality that the settler colonial population and its institutions are a conspicuous feature of the intellectual landscape. Labour directed at understanding and reforming dominating practices and policies of recognition would therefore seem to be more consistent with FNIM values, not to mention a necessary condition for survival.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

I have argued that Coulthard's damage-centered rejection of the recognition paradigm is misguided, that unsatisfying results of relations of testimonial interaction between dominating and subordinated parties are due not to intrinsic deficiencies in the recognition paradigm, but to the circumstances of hermeneutical domination under which they occur. Further, I have demonstrated how the interpellative threat posed by the dominating party is also reproduced and reinforced by hermeneutical domination, and proposed remedies based on the granting of epistemic trust to subordinated parties. Given that the granting of epistemic trust is the prescribed remedy for hermeneutical domination, I have argued that assuming responsibilities that compel said trust on epistemic and moral grounds is an effective strategy for dismantling structures of domination and resisting interpellation by dominating parties. I have then identified three areas of responsibility that I claim fulfill the conditions that establish trustworthiness and identified a model of group agency and responsibility by which these responsibilities may be assumed and enacted.

For First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, dialogical relations with the Canadian state pose risks of interpellation and assimilation that must be weighed against the considerable protections afforded by the state's institutions. Autonomous acceptance of epistemic responsibilities diminishes those risks, enhances agency, and reinforces identity. Given settler colonial logics of elimination, turning away from relationships of testimonial interaction invites greater harms and diminishes potential benefits by invisibilizing First Nations peoples, or by engaging the more overtly repressive and coercive mechanisms of the state. Therefore, a strategy of continued participation in dialogical processes with the Canadian state, in which First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples assume responsibilities that strengthen, maintain, and defend their identities is an effective strategy that is more likely to result in desirable outcomes than options that involve, for example, 'turning away.'

90. Jim Cheney, "The Moral Epistemology of First Nations Stories," *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 7, no. 2 (2002): 91-92.

91. Turner, *Peace Pipe*, 88, 89.

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