

Compensating for Stigma: Representations of Hard-to-Adopt Children in “Today’s Child”

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We examine 4,300 advertisements of children who were featured in Today’s Child, a daily newspaper column written by Helen Allen in the Toronto Telegram and Toronto Star (1964–1982) and syndicated across North America. We highlight how stigma and values were attributed to adoptive children featured in these advertisements. Our findings reveal how the advertisements perpetuated and attached stigma to these children and how this stigma had to be compensated for the children to appeal to prospective parents. Compensatory strategies were ultimately required to manage stigma and increase the value of the featured children.

Key words: *compensation; stigma; adoption; child welfare; children*

The Today’s Child column began in 1964 as part of a concerted effort to make the stigmatized act of adoption, particularly of nonwhite children, socially acceptable. Daily columns in the *Toronto Telegram* and *Toronto Star* (syndicated across North America) that pictured one or more children with descriptions of their background and characteristics served to both define “hard-to-adopt”¹ children and convince would-be parents of the value of the respective child(ren). The column’s author, Helen Allen, worked to convince parents of the life they could have if they adopted the advertised child and offered compensation for stigmas attached to the child. In this article, we elucidate the compensations offered to potential parents as a way of understanding how values and stigma intersected in advertisements of children.

Research regarding stigma and media is in no short supply given the power of media portrayals

to perpetuate stereotypes and assign value to traits (Dahl, 1993; Farnall & Smith, 1999; Kitzinger, 1999; Valkenburg et al., 2016; Waller & McCallum, 2018; Yeshua-Katz & Martins, 2013). Stigma literature has described media as a powerful tool (Lonne & Parton, 2014; Lu et al. 2018) for shifting narratives surrounding oppressive demographics. This article contributes to the literature on both stigma and the sociology of adoption by examining the intersections between media and stigma as they apply to adoption. While consequences of the stigma of adoption for children and families is a prevalent theme in sociological studies of adoption (Dansey et al., 2019; Jacobson, 2014; Kline et al., 2006; Leighton, 2014), this article addresses the gap regarding practices to mitigate stigma that lead to

adoption. Further, research on positive stigma has traditionally presented practices of compensation as beneficial; strategies of compensation can reduce interpersonal discrimination in job applications and can make a person more likeable or socially desirable (Singletary & Hebl, 2009).

Our investigation demonstrates that Allen engaged in compensatory strategies on behalf of the featured children but understands the Today's Child column's use of compensation for stigma management as a harmful practice. Normalized language in the column reflects a form of symbolic violence because it lessens specific forms of life while valuing other forms (Bourdieu, 1984/2000; Zizek, 2008). Symbolic violence is a "gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such" (Bourdieu, 1990). the language creates hierarchies that can be perceived as "disinterested and legitimate" despite "support[ing] relations that are ... suffused with power" (Topper, 2001). This language creates hierarchies between forms of life and imputes different degrees of value upon groups of adoptable children. For example, the column imputes inherently racist ideals upon nonwhite children, informing the reader of the stigma attached to the child that developed through historical structures of race and settler colonialism². Whereas children of various ethnicities and races, abilities, ages, and genders were featured, the column's portrayal of the *most desirable* and *adoptable* children explicitly cite able-bodied, bright females under 2 years old with no health issues and of Anglo-Saxon descent.

This article analyzes 4,300 entries of Today's Child columns from 1964 to 1982, but draws specifically on entries between 1967 to 1971 to demonstrate how advertisements of hard-to-adopt children both devalued children based on stigmatized conditions and tried to compensate for this devaluing. The use of advertisements to sell traits of children to parents is not an area that has yet been teased apart by social researchers.

Children of various racial backgrounds were featured in the Today's Child column, but displayed Indigenous children (1118 total featured) were part of a larger system of Indigenous child removal (see Strong-Boag, 2005). Although we do not singularly discuss Indigenous children in this article, we acknowledge the conditions of settler colonialism in relation to adoption whereby the adoption of Indigenous children into non-Indigenous families is a tactic of the settler colonial state. Regarding settler colonialism in Canada, we are not engaging with the residential school system, but draw attention to the equally destructive period of Indigenous child removal and forced adoption known as the "60s Scoop" (Sinclair, 2007, Spencer, 2017). The 60s Scoop was predicated on child welfare that presented a positive façade; the forced removal and assimilation of Indigenous children occurred under auspices of a child-saving rhetoric. Amendment 88 of the Indian Act (1951) enabled provincial laws to be enforced on reserves, allowing provincial child welfare services to apprehend children in reserve communities. The child welfare system emerged with the demise of the residential school system, was staffed by social workers, and was procured with federal-provincial transfers through the Canada Assistance Plan (1966). White acculturation and assimilation were encouraged by social workers, while children's Indigeneity was deliberately diminished in social history records (Sinclair, 2007). We now know that over 20,000 Indigenous children were subjected to this adoption program in Canada (Brown v Canada 2017). As we discuss adoption and the child welfare system, we acknowledge that the system was built on imperialist and racist foundations and has failed to sufficiently account for the elimination-based perspectives and processes that it perpetuates.

This article has three main parts. First, we connect the sociology of values literature to stigma as a way of framing how Today's Child offered compensations for stigmatized traits in children. Second, we provide an overview of the Today's Child column. Third, we explain the methods of the study. In the fourth section, we analyze how stigma and values figure in compensating for "hard-to-adopt" children.

Values, stigma, and adoption

Values are defined in two primary ways: first, as something directly attached or ascribed to preferred objects; second, as persisting beliefs or conceptions that assert something as preferable or desirable (Thome, 2015). Values are underpinned by evaluative standards that are often revealed in binary codes in the sense of judgments being made, for example, good versus evil, true versus false, beautiful versus ugly. These judgments correspond to moral, cognitive, and aesthetic standards that vary by culture and social group. In sociological terms, every culture offers social values that are conveyed and inscribed through the socialization process and buttressed by social practices and interaction rituals. Concomitantly, a single act usually touches upon manifold and competing values. As a single value is related to a greater set of actions, values come into play, as a plurality, which in turn signifies that they must be harmonized and arranged in comprehensive sets of value orientations that are hierarchically oriented (Thome, 2015).

Values contribute to normative agreements as moral and cultural beliefs that dictate the rationales of actions. They have power in their ability to dictate what is desirable and undesirable through forms of socialization. Values also influence choices and decisions and control ways of thinking and acting. They can be formed and shaped by ideas impressed upon one through interpersonal and institutional beliefs. Values are often inferred and internalized by individuals or systems, which dictate and instigate behaviours based on these ideas. Values serve to organize behaviours and ideas and are often hierarchically ordered to promote efficient and consistent living. When a valued object is not available to an actor, a different valued object may be offered in exchange. Justification provides a logical, mutually agreed upon basis for the actor to accept something valued less. In relation to standards of value in moral, cognitive, and aesthetic realms, recipients of objects of lesser value in one realm may be compensated through another realm. For example, a person may accept an object that is of lower aesthetic value based on higher moral values. The stigma attached to the children in the descriptions in the Today's Child advertisements, as lower aesthetic objects, compromises their value.

While stigma once referred to the bodily signs of a physical disorder, Erving Goffman (1963) considered the ways in which the physical manifestation was lost and replaced by societal categories. Members of a society learn to categorize other members through a collection of attributes considered "ordinary" or "natural" for members of each category. These categories cannot be apolitical or derived without social historical context (Tyler, 2018). For example, stigma attached to Indigeneity is necessarily tied to settler colonialism and imperialism. Marking advertised children with gender, race, ability, and other categories is "highly suggestive about the construction of normalcy" (Strong-Boag, 2005). As social individuals interact with each other, they form expectations about each other's "social identity" from the displayed attributes. If an individual does not fulfil the initial expectations, they are "reduced in our minds" (Goffman, 1963), the subject of a discrepancy of the assumed and actual social identity. If this discrepancy regards a "deeply discrediting" attribute, the individual is the subject of stigma, or "spoiled identity," which influences how other individuals relate to them (Goffman, 1963).

Goffman (1963) operationalized stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting ... really, a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype" (p. 3). Stigma is socially contextualized (e.g., Major & O'Brien, 2005; Swartz et al., 2009) and represents a perceptive lens rooted in ideological understandings. These understandings deem a certain attribute or status tied to an attribute as indicative of a person's identity. A negative attribute indicates stigma and a "spoiled identity," considered inferior, dangerous, and unworthy—a lesser being (Goffman, 1963). The trait tied to this stigma is associated with negative stereotypes or preconceived judgments that shape an individual's perceived identity and becomes their primary identifying attribute: their master status (Fothergill, 2005; Hannem, 2019; Swartz et al., 2009).

Placed in the framework of value, categories of spoiled identities are imputed value; “normal” and “stigmatized” as roles in a social process are connected (Goffman, 1963) in the ongoing production of the value assigned to categorical attributes. Stigma continues to be produced through belief in an imputed value assigned to a category or attribute. The values imputed to the attributes are directly connected to how the actors feel about and react to the attribute. Considering the “spoiled identity” relation to the “normal” as an ongoing negotiation of value allows us to pose stigma as a value-laden position in relation to moral, cognitive, and aesthetic culturally understood standards, as well as posing the production of spoiled identities as serving an end. Such spoiled identities infect objects of lower value but can be compensated for through competing values. For example, in the case of child adoption advertisements, spoiled identities can be compensated through attributions of higher value that compensate for lower value attributes associated with stigma.

The literature on stigma and adoption points to a decline in adoption since the 1970s (Fisher, 2003) and the considerable discrimination and stigmatization faced by adoptees (Goldberg et al., 2011; March, 1995; Small, 2006; Wegar, 2000). Such stigma, according to Mandell (2007), emanates from the norm of the patriarchal nuclear family in Western societies that views deviations like adoption as illegitimate and transgressive. Wegar (2000) illustrates the effects of dominant North American genetic family ideals on community attitudes towards adoption, adoptees, adoption research, and the beliefs of adoption case workers. Social stigma related to adoption not only negatively affects adoptees, but also the practices of case workers. March (1995) indicates that such stigma manifests in motivations to reunite with birth family members as adoptees seek to shed the stigma of being adopted through reunion. Goldberg and colleagues (2011) indicate that adoptive parents in their study, regardless of sexuality, internalized adoptive stigma, and participants who reported internalized stigma, were more depressed than those who did not report internalized stigma.

Today’s Child began as a column dedicated to convincing would-be parents that the featured children were *worth* adopting and that it was virtuous to adopt hard-to-adopt children. Such an adoption movement dovetailed with and fed into the Baby Scoop and the 60s Scoop (Andrews 2018; Stevenson, 2020). Previous work on Today’s Child by Strong-Boag (2005) illustrates that the column began as Canadians were “reconsidering” adopting children; it described potential adoptees as “long-stigmatized youngsters.” Picking up on this assertion, we probe how Today’s Child promulgated such stigmatization and adoption. Whereas the broader literature on stigma bring attention to the presence of stigma and its effects in relation to adoption, the following analysis brings into focus the role of value and stigma in the selling of adoption to would-be parents. Further, this article unearths the discriminatory hierarchies underlying how potential adoptees were described and advertised to primarily white adoptive parents. To begin this analysis, in the next section we provide an overview of Helen Allen and the Today’s Child column.

Helen Allen and Today’s Child

In 1962 James Band, provincial deputy minister of welfare, travelled through Ontario visiting orphanages and institutions (Adams, 1982). Band was appalled to find “hard-to-adopt” children residing in institutions; this category included children with physical or mental disabilities, racialized children, and children older than 2 (Leach, 1977). Band approached the *Toronto Telegram*’s managing editor Andrew MacFarlane in 1964 and proposed advertising these hard-to-adopt children in the newspaper (Adams, 1982). At MacFarlane’s direction, then-reporter Helen Allen began producing the Today’s Child column in 1964. Allen’s column appealed to would-be parents to adopt hard-to-adopt children by advertising each child’s characteristics, including appearance, race, sex, and disability, with a photo of the child and an address to contact Allen if the reader was interested in adopting the child. The proposal experienced initial pushback from all but four children’s aid societies, as the societies’ employees worried about the harm of advertising the children (Adams, 1982). When the first four societies had 18 of the 23 featured

children adopted, the column became used by societies across Ontario (Srikanthan, 2006). Today's Child gained traction and grew through the end of the 1960s, reflected in the increase in the numbers of children featured in the column and participating children's aid societies. In 1972, the column moved to the *Toronto Star* and continued to expand; by 1974, Today's Child was running in 23 daily newspapers, 150 weekly newspapers, and "racial and ethnic presses" (Leach, 1976).

With the success of Today's Child, in 1968 Allen proposed further advertising with a television program, Family Finder, run by the production company CFTO. The program ran on Channel 9 television network and was made available "without charge" on 12 other Ontario television networks (Leach, 1975). Allen hosted the program alongside David Devall, bringing children available for adoption for a half-hour of unscripted interview and play on camera. Over the program's 13 years, each episode featured 4 or 5 children, who had agreed to be featured or whose case worker felt it would be beneficial to have them featured (Adams, 1982). As in Today's Child, prospective parents were given an address to contact Allen, who responded and forwarded their letter to the children's aid society responsible for the child. Today's Child and Family Finder were Ontario Ministry of Welfare projects and received praise and funding from the Ministry, including receiving provincial funding for the travel of children and their case worker to be on the television program (MacDonald, 1977). The project was supported federally by the National Adoption Desk, which eventually employed Allen to work alongside Victoria Leach. Leach recommended the use of Today's Child or columns of a like kind for "unadoptable" children in her correspondence with provincial ministers of children and welfare (Leach, 1976).

Over her tenure with Today's Child and Family Finder, Helen Allen was an adoption advocate and speaker, reporter, television host, and Ministry of Welfare employee. She spoke at international conferences and attended meetings with adoptive parent advocates (e.g., CanAdopt) and official gatherings such as adoption resource exchange meetings (Leach, 1980). Allen was the public face of adoption in Canada, labelled the "fairy godmother of adoption" (Srikanthan, 2006). She was a celebrated figure, and in 1970 was given the Order of Canada (Martin, 2014). Outside of Canada, she was involved with adoptions across the border which were featured on "That's My Line" with television host Bob Barker. Contemporary with the American "Operation Baby Lift" in Vietnam, Helen Allen was part of a Canadian team that moved Vietnamese babies for adoption overseas. Allen had a dramatic impact on the movement of children from Canada and abroad into adoptive parents' homes. Indeed Allen estimated that she was responsible for the adoption of 11,000 children across North America (Srikanthan, 2006).

Methods

The study utilized a mixed methods design (Hanson et al., 2005) where the Today's Child columns were coded for quantitative analysis and more in-depth qualitative analysis was done subsequently. Qualitative data was prioritized and shaped the analysis of the current paper, while the quantitative data is presented in descriptive form to situate the broader qualitative themes. Strengths of the techniques complemented one another through the integration of the two methods to understand the breadth and depth of stigmatizing traits. A mixed methods design enriched the analysis of value inscription in hard-to-adopt children in Today's Child.

Sample

This research analyzes the child adoption advertisements between 1964, when Helen Allen started her column, and 1982, when she retired from the *Toronto Star* and her column³. We analyzed all 4,300 children featured in 3,299 columns. The *Toronto Telegram* (1964–1971) was accessed through Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, Ontario. The *Toronto Star* (1972–1982) was accessed online through ProQuest Historical Papers⁴. A column featured between one and seven children; one child was the most common number of children per column.

Quantitative analysis

We conducted descriptive analysis of eight characteristics that demonstrate children’s categorization as hard to adopt by Allen in the first Today’s Child column to illustrate the population featured in the column. We report on frequencies and percentages of the eight characteristics: eye colour, skin colour, hair colour, sex, age, origin and descent, mental disabilities, physical disability. “Eye colour” was collapsed into four categories: not stated⁵, brown, blue, and green. “Skin colour” was collapsed into three categories: not stated, not white, white. “Hair colour” was collapsed into three categories: not stated, not blonde, blonde. “Sex” was collapsed into two categories: female, male. “Age” was collapsed into two categories: 2 and under, over 2 years old.⁶ The “origin and descent” variable was collapsed into four categories: not stated, European, Indigenous, non-European/non-Indigenous racialized other. “Mental disabilities” was collapsed into two categories: no disability, mental disability. “Physical disabilities” was collapsed into two categories: no disability, physical disability.

Qualitative analysis

We conducted thematic analysis to determine how media representations ascribed value onto children portrayed in the Today’s Child column. We define four emergent themes (Altheide & Schneider, 2013) regarding the means of inscribing value: intrinsic compensation, extrinsic compensation, temporality of negative traits, and positive reframing of negative traits. Tracking negative and compensatory traits allowed us to understand the ascription of value placed onto children considered hard to adopt and how value was communicated and perceived through media by Today’s Child. We used Creswell’s process of winnowing to truncate the codes used to represent the themes (Creswell, 2013). Using the framework of value production and stigma, we interpret what it means for a child to become an object of value as a hard-to-adopt child.

Results: Compensating for hard-to-adopt children

Quantitative results

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Children Ascribed with Adoptable Attributes Advertised in *Today’s Child* Column

Sex	Female	Male		
	36.2%	63.8%		
Age	1555	2745		
	2 years old or younger	Older than 2 years	Not stated	
	30.2%	68.5%	1.3%	
	1300	2944	56	

Origin of Descent	European	Indigenous	Non-European/ Non-Indigenous Racialized	Not stated
	34.3%	26.0%	9.7%	30.0%
	1477	1118	415	1290
Eye Colour	Blue	Brown	Green	Not stated
	28.4%	44.0%	6.7%	20.9%
	1221	1898	284	897
Hair Colour	Blonde	Not blonde	Not stated	
	17.3%	58.2%	24.5%	
	742	2504	1054	
Skin Colour	White	Not white	Not stated	
	39.0%	13.7%	47.3%	
	1679	587	2034	
Mental Disability	No disability	Disability		
	94.6%	5.4%		
	4068	232		
Physical Disability	No disability	Disability		
	79.6%	20.4%		
	3421	879		

Quantitative results

Today’s Child was intended to find parents for hard-to-adopt children; therefore, the range of attributes of featured children demonstrates the respective adoptability of the child. For instance, boys were featured far more frequently than girls, suggesting that boys are considered harder to adopt than girls. This finding was reflected in Allen’s first article on June 6, 1964; Allen outlined the mission statement of Today’s Child and suggested that a baby girl was the ideal adoptable child. Having a higher presence in the column then indicates the child being farther from the ideal, and thus a lower hierarchical ranking (Bendo et al., 2019; Hepburn et al., 2020).

There are two noteworthy points in our quantitative results. First, in the first article Allen indicated that she would not include children with mental disabilities; this deliberate exclusion indicates that such children are particularly unadoptable. Second, while the statistics indicate that children with physical disability and racialized children are the minority of the featured children, both categories are overrepresented compared to their presence in the general population. At the time of the column's tenure, Indigenous peoples made up between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of the total population (Saku, 1999) yet composed 26% of children featured in the column (Bendo et al., 2019). Similarly, 20.4% of children in the column had physical disabilities, despite physical disability (including short-term disability) being prevalent in only around 5% of children in Canada in 1978 (Wilkins & Adams, 1983).

Qualitative results

The Today's Child advertisements serve as a vehicle to communicate stigma, and thus inscribe value onto featured children, which defines their rank in a hierarchy of adoptability. To address lower hierarchical rankings, the column offered socially desirable attributes as a compensatory strategy. The strategy informed the readers that there was a stigma to be compensated for and offered an appropriate compensation. This practice informed prospective parents of the severity of the stigmas attached to respective children in its effort to engage in compensatory strategies.

Intrinsic compensation. Children in the Today's Child column were often described by the negative characteristics, traits, or dispositions they displayed, which were then compensated for by alternative positive characteristics, or characteristics that were portrayed as positive, attempting to increase the child's value. This is particularly evident in excerpts that focus on Indigenous children. In the columns, settler colonial attitudes about Indigenous children suggested that their Indigeneity could be compensated for by the labour they could offer to prospective parents. These descriptions of positive traits possessed by the child served as the compensatory elements in the advertisements to convince prospective parents to value the child as adoptable. Consider these quotes:

MARCH 28, 1969—You'd certainly expect Ross to grow up to be a football player with his broad shoulders and substantial body. His allergies are completely compensated for by his cheerful, happy disposition.

While Ross was initially described as a boy who had the potential to grow up to be a football player, he was subsequently characterized as having a lower physical value based on the stigma surrounding his allergies. This stigma was compensated by the desirable quality of a happy disposition. Ross's characteristics of allergies, happiness, and masculinity were inscribed with value, informing the reader of valuable characteristics more generally. The value of each of these characteristics was preestablished and placed onto the child. The characteristics were inscribed onto other children who were featured in the column and defined their adoptability; Ross's allergies were compensated for with his masculinity and happiness, which informed readers and prospective parents of the appropriate compensation for allergies. The compensation informed readers that allergies were stigmatized and further informed readers that the stigma was attached to other featured children. The amount of compensation offered indicates to the prospective parents the severity of the stigma.

MARCH 5, 1971—Corinne has had some unhappy experiences which may make it hard for her to adjust to a new home. But she is an affectionate girl, anxious to belong to a family, so she wants to try.

The child was described as having a blemish of character that the parents would have to accept—her unsettling former experiences that impact her ability to adjust to a new home. Despite this fact, the child's value had the potential to increase because she was affectionate and willing to try and overcome her blemish of character. What she lacked, she could compensate for herself, if she was willing to try and overcome her blemish of character and establish a sense of belonging in the family.

JANUARY 23, 1971—And as you see in the full-length picture, he has a problem.... His foster mother thinks nature has made up mentally for what David lacks physically, because she finds him a very bright boy.... Though he can't manipulate his legs well, he is expert with his hands. This good-natured child has a winning personality. He is cuddly and affectionate and loves to be read to.

The column described David not as a person with characteristics but rather by the fact that he had a problem (listed as spina bifida). David was physically stigmatized and advertised as a child whose value was in his intelligence and character to compensate for the fact that he was physically less valuable. The column attempted to make up for David's disability in multiple ways, demonstrating that his negative trait required more compensation than others, such as allergies. While there was potential that convincing prospective parents to care for a child with spina bifida required additional care, the advertisement informed the reader that David's characteristics were much more stigmatizing than those of other children and required much more compensation to redeem his value as an adoptable child.

MAY 14, 1971—He has been diagnosed as a dwarf and has the characteristics of that condition—legs and arms shorter than average.... Danny knows he is a dwarf and likes the attention he gets.

Like David, Danny was described solely by his dwarfism. The description suggested that he was of lesser value than other children who were not described by a condition. Marked with physical stigma, Danny was described as compensating for his condition. His condition was stigmatized and therefore value-less; to compensate for his condition he was described as liking the attention he received for it.

Extrinsic compensation. When featured children were defined by the negative characteristics or dispositions they possessed, these traits were compensated for by the potentially beneficial offerings they could provide, including their ability to economically benefit the family through labour and monetary value. Extrinsic compensation, such as work or income, was most present for children who were described as Indigenous. Consider these quotes:

FEBRUARY 28, 1969—This earnest young workman is Ralph, aged 2. Everything about him looks purposeful from the intent expression on his face to the sturdy way he's planted his feet. Ralph is a healthy, solid little boy with broad shoulders and the dark eyes and hair of his Indian ancestors.

Although Ralph was of "Indian" descent, this was compensated for by what he could offer the family through his ability to work as a sturdy, solid, broad workman. While his origin of descent was portrayed as tribally stigmatized, these work traits inscribed value onto the child through a valuable service they offered a prospective family. The language that was chosen to describe this child was strategic and showcased his capabilities as a potential worker. This form of compensation framed this child and other similar children as useful, competent workers who could provide output for the prospective families, rather than valuing them for who they were as children. Below, Dean and Ken were also strategically described by the physical traits that they possessed as workers on a farm:

JANUARY 25, 1970—These good-looking boys are Dean ... and Ken, brothers aged 8 and 10.... The boys are English and Objibiwa (*sic*) in background, both sturdily built and healthy.... The boys are living on a farm and they really love the life. They are interested in the animals, like helping with the chores, and find the barn a great place to play.

The boys were not described by their personalities but were conceptualized as children who had the physical build to work on a farm, as well as personal interests in engaging in farm work and farm living. The brothers were overwritten with tribal stigma by being described as Indigenous, suggesting that the stereotyping of "who" they were mattered in adoptive parent decision making (Timberlake et al., 2015). The advertisement was not interested in describing who the children were but rather what they could offer to prospective parents to compensate for

their ancestry. This finding reflects the findings of Engel and colleagues (2012), who discuss the practice of forced labour of Indigenous children who were transracially adopted or placed in boarding schools. To compensate for Dean and Ken's racial background, the boys provided extrinsic compensation through work as Indigenous farm workers. Thus, the column showcased these children as adoptable workers rather than adoptable children. Other columns highlighted the benefit of adopting Indigenous children for the economic gain they could provide to the family. Consider this excerpt:

JUNE 3, 1967—Ruth and Terry look just as unhappy as you'd expect of two children who have no parents and don't know what the future holds for them.... They are Anglo Saxon and Objiva (*sic*) Indians and are registered as Indian so they are eligible for government health and educational grants. This does not change whether they are adopted by white or Indian parents.

Like Dean and Ken above, Ruth and Terry were inscribed with tribal stigma as "registered Indians." The final lines of the excerpt marketed the children as monetarily valuable to their prospective family regardless of the heritage of the family. The extrinsic gain was intended to compensate for the children having decreased value due to their racial background.

Transitory and permanent compensation. Negative characteristics or traits in children featured in Today's Child were often described as temporary. The need for compensation was lessened when the negative trait was temporary, as choosing such a child had a calculated benefit of being able to perform normalcy at a point in the future. More compensation was necessary if the characteristic or disposition was permanent, as those children would not have the benefit of normalcy. Consider:

FEBRUARY 15, 1967—She has dark, almond-shaped eyes, a thick crop of light brown hair and fair skin.... Ruthann has a small extra thumb on her right hand which can be removed by surgery when she is a year old.

The small extra thumb on Ruthann's hand could be removed shortly, which made this flaw removable. While it was stigmatizing while it was there, the extra thumb was temporary, and thus would not permanently impact Ruthann's value as an adoptable object. Due to its temporary nature, the thumb required very little compensation to account for it. Ruthann's value decreased while she possessed this physical stigma, but once it was removed, her value would increase.

MAY 13, 1971—Margaret is in good health but has the temperamental ups and downs that go with adolescence. Undoubtedly the "downs" are complicated by concern over her future. This young girl needs a warm, stimulating home with stable, understanding, relaxed parents, preferably in an urban setting.

The advertisement explicitly emphasized the child's good health to combat her undesirable temperament. Her temperament was not permanent and instead was something that she was experiencing as an adolescent. This suggested that this was a temporary state and shortcoming addressable by relaxed parents who could offer support as she developed. The child's value would increase as she overcame this temporary adolescent stage.

APRIL 22, 1971—Doctors feel only one problem remains—the fingers on her right hand are stiff but she uses it well. Her right eye is turned in and this is due for correction soon.

Although the child had issues with her right eye, the advertisement suggested that the limitations should not be a concern for prospective parents as the temporary condition would be corrected by surgery and thus would not be a permanent stigma.

DECEMBER 6, 1969—At 19 months Mark is just at the age when a child is busy exploring his expanding world where there are always new places to go and new things to see and new skills to develop. For Mark the exploring is different. He can't run and climb like most children his age. He can't feel things with his hands. Mark was born with no legs and only the upper parts of his arms. Extensive tests have revealed no reason for his condition.... It wouldn't be all give for parents who could take Mark to their hearts. He's such a happy, friendly little boy, so enthusiastic and eager to try anything.

In comparison to the advertisements above, which suggested a temporarily lowered value, this advertisement described a permanent physical stigma. Mark's disability was permanent, and he was inscribed with many positive characteristics to compensate his value as an adoptable child. While the column never directly stated that the disability was permanent in the same way that it explicitly described the temporality of conditions, the permanence was demonstrated as impacting Mark's value as an adoptable object by requiring far more compensation than a temporary disability would require.

Discussion

The expressed intent of the Today's Child's progenitors—Dr. James Band, Andrew MacFarlane, and Helen Allen—was to have more children adopted out of institutions. Past the age of 2, caregivers in institutions did not expect children to ever be adopted (Adams, 1982). Hannem (2019) outlines the way that discourses mobilizing support for children and families of incarcerated people often inadvertently perpetuate stigma despite any intent to a public good; our research demonstrates that many consequences of the Today's Child column had negative implications for children, including being the object of colonial expansion (Bendo et al., 2019) and having negative stigmas attached to them. The results above indicate that the children featured were grouped into collections of different stigmas which required different compensation. The individual featured child served as an example of a child with a particular stigma and of a particular value; the featured child indicated to potential parents what kind of compensation they might expect with a like child. Allen indicated this further in her column:

One of the large Children's Aid Societies reports the happy adoption of four children of mixed race this week, a new record for them. None of the youngsters had appeared in Today's Child, but all of them went to parents whose interest was first kindled by seeing other children with similar backgrounds in this column. (February 13, 1971)

Prospective parents who indicated interest in a specific featured child were sent information on a like child if the featured child was not available (Adams, 1982). The success of replacing one child with another indicates that the value of the children featured in the column was determined by the way their attributes were described in the column. The descriptions signalled to prospective parents that they needed to be able to accept or overcome the child's shortcoming(s); they also stigmatized and inscribed a lesser value onto that child and like children. The descriptions created variation in value and stigma; some children required further acceptance or more compensation than others.

As evidenced in the findings, children were characterized by negative traits which were then combatted with descriptions of positive characteristics to increase the child's value through a form of intrinsic compensation. This was also evident on an extrinsic level, whereby children's negative characteristics were compensated for by positive extrinsic aspects that they could offer to prospective parents, such as labour and profit. These extrinsic compensatory traits were heightened in the daily columns to showcase the children's potential value. Finally, findings also reveal a sense of transitory and permanent compensation whereby children with permanent negative traits were presented with enhanced compensatory descriptions within the columns compared to children whose negative characteristics were described as temporary and therefore short term. Collectively, the findings highlight

the various forms of compensation that shifted throughout the columns to inscribe or detract value to, from, and upon children featured in Today's Child.

It is worth noting that all the quotes featured in this article come from four publication years: 1967, 1969, 1970, and 1971. While these were not all of the available quotes regarding compensation, they were the quotes deemed *most* directly relevant to the discussion. The timeframe likely points to evolving contexts of value in relation to child adoption. For instance, children's aid societies coined the term "hard to adopt" in the 1950s to describe adoptive children in institutions with undesirable characteristics that contributed to their status as hard to adopt (Adams, 1982). Internal use of term by child service workers generally referred to children over the age of 2 (Wolkomir, 1974). In the late 1960s, the term was carried out of the institutional context by James Band, the deputy minister of welfare in Ontario, who initiated a campaign to advertise children available for adoption. Helen Allen popularized the term and articulated it to the wider North American public through the Today's Child column, while social workers, parent advocates, legislators, and the press contributed to the mobilization of the term.

The study presents some limitations and recommendations for future research. Due to ethical considerations, this article does not include the pictures of the children from the Today's Child column. Featuring the photos of the young people in published work without their explicit consent would only serve to further stigmatize and harm these individuals. Additionally, we did not want to reaffirm any Indigenous communities' negative feelings towards the photos but rather highlight the importance of investigating how compensations, values, and stigma intersected in advertisements of children and figured onto hard-to-adopt children. This article offers space for future research to explore the perspectives and viewpoints of the children featured in Today's Child as well as the adoptive parents to understand the impact of advertisements on the parent's decisions to adopt and how projected stigma figured in the family. Future consideration could be given to the reception of prospective parents to the compensatory strategies. This article opens space for future research to investigate specific stigmas and value, including racialized, sexualized, or ability-based values.

Conclusion

This article provides a thematic analysis of the mobilization of compensation and stigma of adoptive children employed in the Today's Child column. In an analysis of 4,300 column excerpts from the Today's Child, we employed a mixed method design to demonstrate the breadth of the column's featured children and how the advertisements attached stigma to those children. Findings reveal three main themes relevant to compensating for stigma: intrinsic compensation, extrinsic compensation, and transitory and permanent compensation. These themes reveal that compensation figures on to the child based on the child's portrayed characteristics; different stigmas require different compensation to rehabilitate the child's value for prospective parents.

Given the current gap in the literature regarding the use of advertisements to sell traits of adoptive children to prospective parents, this study contributes to the field of child adoption, child welfare, and child and youth studies more broadly. We also contribute to the study of stigma and value by contributing an analysis of theoretical and practical mobilizations of stigma and value overwritten onto children. For instance, the article conjoins considerations of value to Goffman's foundational sociological work, and thus contributes to research and broader theory within areas of sociological inquiry. We contribute to the development of literature around stigma and stigma management by accounting for an external party compensating for stigma using other values.

This article demonstrates how conceptions of value overlap with understandings of stigma and indicate ways in which stigma is compensated for. While stigma reaffirms "the normal" in this context, it reveals ableist and racist ideals of the time. This article shows how stigma was attached to children in the process of making those children

acceptable for adoption. This legacy remains part of how the colonial government justifies both the removal and adoption of what are considered hard-to-adopt children. Take for example, the Millennium Scoop (Spencer, 2017) in the Canadian context, whereby Indigenous children are disproportionately removed from their homes to be adopted. This continuing child welfare practice demonstrates the durability of stigma and conceptions of value that remain with us today.

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- 1 Today's Child columns conceptualized hard-to-adopt children as boys, those older than 2, racialized, or disabled children who were not considered desirable to most prospective parents.
 - 2 Settler colonialism refers to a process whereby foreign peoples from a centre of imperial power move as a large group to a region and displace people indigenous to the land through genocide, expulsion, or segregation. For Patrick Wolfe (2006), settler colonialism follows a logic of elimination. It is an engrained system committed to the eradication of the Indigenous population. Forced Indigenous adoption is part of this larger eliminationist logic.
 - 3 After Allen retired, the Today's Child columns became less frequent over the next three years, though continued for years afterwards.
 - 4 Strong-Boag's (2005) previous research highlighting the importance of Helen Allen in adoption in Ontario only sampled the first three years of her Today's Child columns.
 - 5 For precision, any characteristic not given was coded as "not stated."
 - 6 The separation of 2 years and above reflects the original finding of Band's investigation of institutions and orphanages, in which children over 2 years old were considered by care workers to be unadoptable (Adams, 1982).

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