

Squaring the Circle Game:
A Critical Look at Canada's 2008 Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential
Schools

by

Michael Boldt Radmacher
B.A., University of Regina, 2008

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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On 11 June 2008 the Government of Canada delivered an official apology to former students of Indian residential schools for its participation in the schools' creation and administration. The morally infused discourses of political apologies may at first seem to symbolize a progressive step towards a better and more egalitarian future. This thesis, however, will challenge and problematize such perspectives by presenting not only a critical analysis of the 2008 apology *itself* but also by contextualizing the apology's narratives with the colonial framing strategies which have historically served to marginalize and dominate the Indigenous nations and peoples of Turtle Island. Through the critical exploration of the 2008 apology's operability and political significance in Canada's colonial context, this thesis intends to reveal both the message(s) that the apology *got across* to the Canadian general public and the forms of domination and political distraction that the apology's seemingly moral and progressive narratives effectively belie.

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Acknowledgments

Dr. Matt James, thank you for guiding me.
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Mom and Dad, thank you for believing in me.
And David, thank you for loving me.

Dedication

Dedicated to the silenced young.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Historically, political apologies have had little to no place in international fora. The morally infused principle of acknowledging past harms is a moderately novel discourse within Western domestic and international politics. Previously, the dominant mode of thinking was that the strong did what they wished purely based on their strength, a sentiment which is reflected by Thucydides in the “Melian dialogue”: “the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Gibney et al., 2007: 2). This paper intends to explore whether Thucydides’ maxim, which reflects the dynamics of ancient intergroup politics and power, still speaks true in today’s so-called *age of apology*. The recent upsurge in political apologies and reparation politics as a whole signals an identifiable shift from a universal discourse that saw political apologies as unnecessary, and even treasonous, to a discourse where they seem to have been accepted as a normative ought. At initial glance, it appears that no longer is a society able to successfully move into the future until it recognizes, addresses, and grapples with its “demons from the past” (Gibney et al., 2007: 1).

Offering political apologies has become so commonplace that numerous scholars have labeled our age the “Age of Apology” (see Gibney et al., 2008) which seemingly is appropriate seeing that it is rare to glance over the day’s top news headlines without encountering articles depicting the most recent political apologetic utterances. There has been longstanding scholarly interest and interrogation into reparation politics as a whole, but not until recently has this new age of apology captured specific academic attention

where political apologies have been seen to be *a part of* but conceptually *distinct from* reparation (James, 2008). This burgeoning field of apology has been, in part, fueled by the political happenings of the last half of the twentieth century, where identity politics have become politically salient and where politics of recognition discourses have been heavily employed. It has been an age where victims of identity-based injustices have been mobilizing, demanding and receiving apologies and reparations from state and government leaders.

Even though the field of scholarship on political apology may be relatively new, it is no longer a field that speaks of apologetic discourses as simply an emerging phenomenon. Traditionally, the field of scholarship has primarily grappled with political apologies as the study of an emerging international narrative and as a mere burgeoning phenomenon. Much scholarly energy has been dedicated to the normative questions of political apology and reparation, such as whether they are ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Popular views of apologies, along with much of the scholarship, have logically focused on their moral dimensions and have largely ignored the political aspects of the phenomenon (Tavuchis, 1991; Nobles, 2003). These normative questions and narrow apolitical interpretations are no longer the only terrain being traversed within apology and reparation scholarship. The field has gone beyond such limitations and matured into a full blown analytical space of scholarly interrogation and discourse, interested in fine grain analysis and disentangling strategies within *its own right*. It is to this field that the following research intends to contribute.

Following in the same spirit that has led others to seriously explore political apologies on their own, this thesis intends to explore the sociopolitical significance of the

comparatively recent Canadian 2008 apology to former students of Indian residential schools (IRS). Admittedly, there are many questions and possible analytical avenues to pursue when examining political apologies. As noted, this thesis will not entertain the often posed normative questions of apologies nor will it entertain the easy attraction of ‘why’ reparation. The primary concern of this thesis is to not only identify and capture the message(s) that the 2008 apology *got across* to the Canadian general public, but also to explore the framing strategies which informed how the apology was perceived and interpreted. This exploration will force us to take into serious account how state actors, Indigenous¹ advocacy groups, media organizations and other social actors perceived, framed, and then conveyed the 2008 apology. While keeping in mind the often cited moral character of apology, this exploration of political apologies will go further and examine how political apologies operate to advance goals other than moral or emotional reconciliation. By building upon apology’s moral character this thesis implicitly accepts apology’s moral dimension while at the same time arguing that morality is not apology’s only offered force. Basically stated, this paper’s analytical framework sits on the sturdy position that there is an undeniable *political* force behind official political apologies; their presence in contemporary politics should not be cynically dismissed nor romantically viewed. Historically they have in fact accomplished real and heavy political work.

This project therefore rejects the criticisms heard from such notables as New School University political scientist Adolph Reed, who asserts that the politics of reparation “does not require the rhetoric” found in “the Clintonoid tenor of sappy public

¹ While the term “Aboriginal” usually refers to Indigenous peoples in Canada, while the term “Indigenous” refers to Indigenous peoples from places other than Canada, the terms here will largely be employed interchangeably.

apologies and maudlin psychobabble about collective pain and healing” (quoted in Torpey, 2006: 120). Reed’s argument is correct that reparation-promoting strategies do not *necessarily* require a political apology component in order to “succeed”; furthermore, Reed’s implicit criticism of an apology’s quality and authenticity is in fact a valid avenue of interrogation. Reed, though, is misguided in his cynical dismissal of apologies; his *carte blanche* dismissal effectively obscures apologies’ political potential and force. Such dismissive attitudes are thus blind to both the real political work that apologies have accomplished and the processes of domination which they belie. Therefore, by sitting on a foundation that appreciates the *sociopolitical* force of apologies, this thesis intends to examine the 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors in its entirety in an attempt to capture both its dominant framing strategies and interpretations so that the apology’s political significance and role in future oriented discussions can be distilled. Said another way, instead of speaking of the 2008 apology as part of just a mere phenomenon, this thesis intends to parse out the 2008 apology itself in order to reveal both the message(s) that it *got across* to the Canadian general public and the forms of domination that the apology’s seemingly moral and progressive narratives belie.

To further explain this paper’s intentions we must return to Thucydides’ maxim that “the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Gibney et al., 2007: 2). Even though we intend to earnestly explore both the significance of an apology’s morally infused rhetoric and the transformational potential that it represents, Thucydides’ maxim still rings loudly for our discussion. Apologies do not take place within power vacuums. They are, rather, embroiled and enmeshed within prevailing intergroup politics and their structures of power and dominance. Furthermore,

as will be depicted later in this paper, the manner in which political apologies are organized, framed, interpreted, and then conveyed often reflects the very power structures that the apology seeking group originally intended to traverse or transform. Careful examination of both the 2008 IRS apology itself and its political significance in Canada's colonial context will reveal how the political apology has operated within Canada's colonial governance regime, political culture and power structures. Said another way, repositioning the colonial frame as our overarching lens of analysis offers us an opportunity to contextualize the apology by accounting for the structures of domination and privilege that have been unleashed by a history of European imperialism, colonialism, land/resource usurpation, and racialized power relations. Examining the 2008 apology through a progressive postcolonial lens helps further reveal the dynamics of the inequitable colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state, a relationship which Glen Coulthard defines as "a relationship of domination" (2009). Simply put, by contextualizing the 2008 apology within the sociopolitical realities of Canada's contemporary regime, the often praised political apology of 2008 will hopefully be seen in a whole new and revealing light.

Moving forward, the rest of this introductory chapter will be allocated to setting the stage for the research that will be presented in the following chapters. To do this, a brief overview of terminology will be outlined, along with an overview of the theoretical terrain that has been paved by notable scholars within the field. Most importantly, the remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to the introduction and discussion of three international examples of official apologies. The brief survey of these international examples will provide us with a better sense as to what kind of work political apologies

have accomplished in the international arena and in other sociopolitical contexts. This task will allow us to better position the 2008 IRS apology within the growing international arena of apology, and to better understand how Canada's colonial context presents certain unique challenges for political apologies that may not be found when reparation advocates engage other sociopolitical regimes.

Once the stage has been set and a range of political outcomes resulting from political apologies have been drawn out, the second chapter will then introduce Canada's 2008 apology to the survivors of Indian residential schools. It is within this space that the apology's background and significance will be weighed. Most importantly, this chapter will employ political scientist Matt James' distilled criteria for quantifiably measuring an apology's authenticity.² The employment of Matt James' eight part framework will hold a central position in this chapter's conceptual formulations. The set of criteria outlined by James, which is in part a distillation of criteria set out by other scholars of apology such as Tavuchis, Barkan, Torpey, and Gibney and Roxstrom, will help qualify the 2008 apology as being a *robust apology*, a *quasi-apology*, or a *non-apology* (James, 2008). By both examining the apology in its entirety and by exploring its distinctive ceremonial components we will not only be able to gauge its technical successes and failures but we will also be able to elucidate the apology's authenticity and subsequent political employment and saliency within contemporary Canadian politics.

Following the apology's unpackaging, the third substantive chapter will be dedicated to understanding the framing strategies which largely defined the apology for

² Apologetic authenticity commands our attention not because of any concerns for emotional conveyance or determination of any true or genuine emotional authenticity, but rather because of an official apology's collective and delegated nature (this distinction will be further discussed in Chapter 2).

Canadians; how was it framed, picked up, and used by the principal actors involved? Following in the same spirit as John L. Austin's book *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), where he argues that when we *say* something we also *do* something, this chapter will move beyond the mere performance and surface meaning of the apology and explore what the apology has *done*. Said another way, chapter three intends to theoretically link the technical realities of the apology to the produced accumulative *meaning* of the apology. This task's methodology is centered on employing a qualitative-based media survey analysis that will identify and capture not only the dominant message(s) that the apology *got across* to Canadians, but also the dominant themes and perspectives which framed both the apology itself and its actors. In doing so, the chapter's analysis will reveal how the apology has been both politically and strategically employed to (re)shape or transform Indigenous-settler relations (or conversely, how the apology has been employed to (re)entrench prevailing stereotypes, representations, and power relations).

Finally, the last chapter will take these results and appropriately frame them within the Canadian political context. Doing so will not only locate and confront the possible unintended consequences of the apology's success, but it will also identify and acknowledge the apology's potential for acting as a site of progressive future-oriented struggle. As previously noted, by taking into account the structures of privilege and power that characterize Canada's governance regime, we will help reveal not only the apology's potential for meaningful transformation but also demonstrate how it reflects what Cornassel and Holder call the "politics of distraction" (2008). In conclusion, it is important to understand that at first glance the field of political apology, as a site of scholarly interrogation, may seem to focus on a specific microlevel and bound set of

dismissible events, yet when broader circumstances and prevailing social structures are taken into serious account, the study of political apology can in fact be used as a critical diagnostic window able to intimately gaze into the most important and powerful discourses of our time.

Setting the Stage

Before we go any further, let us begin by defining our terms; clear definitions will help us traverse the conceptual terrain of apology and reparation with better care. The rest of this paper will follow John Torpey's conceptual depiction of reparation. As he outlines in his research, "reparation" has historically been thought to imply only monetary compensation, yet this narrow definition has come to be thought of as too limiting; the contemporary usage of the term has much broader connotations (Torpey, 2003: 4). A primary feature of the contemporary definition of reparation is its priority to non-materialist harms. Contemporary reparatory agendas have not only addressed the material and financial losses resulting from a historical injustice, but have also attempted to make up for the "egregiously and unjustly violated selves and for squandered life chances" (Torpey, 2003: 4). This paper will employ this contemporary definition of reparation.

Furthermore, as figure 1 (Torpey, 2003: 6) illustrates, Torpey argues that reparation politics can be conceived as a series of progressive circles, starting from the central "core," which typically involves truth commissions and criminal trials, to material redistribution, apologies, and then progressing all the way out to a type of transformative

reparation (Torpey, 2003: 6). This diagram can help us in distinguishing the *distinct* components of the broader phenomenon of reparation while acknowledging their *relation*. For the purpose of this paper, while Torpey's hierarchy establishes that apologies are structurally connected to reparation as a broad concept, they are conceptually *distinct*. Torpey's conceptualization shows that political apologies do not necessarily need to be a part of reparation promotions or packages, but rather that

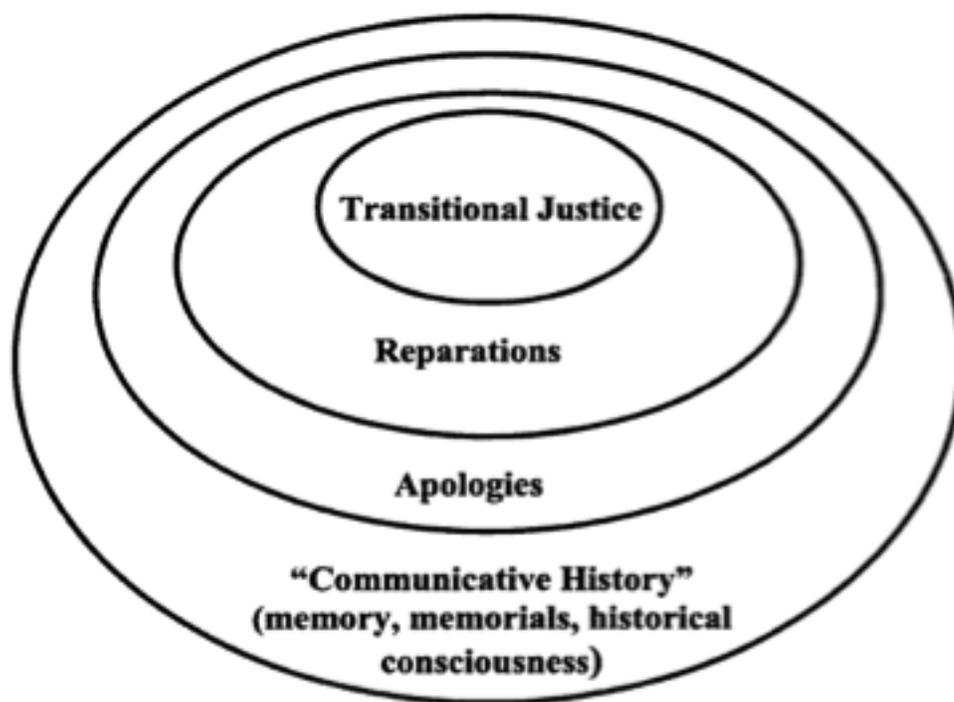


Figure 1 (Reproduced from Torpey, 2003: 6)

apologies and their political potential are distinct and must be analyzed critically without romanticism or cynicism. Therefore, the following research will treat the political phenomenon of apologies as distinct while still acknowledging their interconnected relationship with the greater hierarchy of reparation. This distinction is not only conceptually feasible, but also practically necessary; the broader realm of reparation is

too encompassing to be given proper analytical attention within this arena.

In addition to Torpey's conceptual framework of reparation, this thesis will also employ Brandon Hamber's further distinction between the term *reparation* (the singular) and *reparations* (the plural) (Hamber, 2007; 2006). While the latter refers strictly to acts and events associated with attempts in making amends, for example the building of memorials, compensation payments, and other types of acts found within the centre core of Torpey's reparation hierarchy, the former refers mainly to the more psychological or non-materialistic aspects; the "making good" psychologically for what has been damaged, lost or destroyed (Hamber, 2007: 270). To put it more clearly, victims are generally seeking *reparation* through the granting of *reparations*. The lexicon of reparation politics is fraught with semantic struggles; it thus behooves us to speak in unison.

In order to set the stage for the following research, what follows is a primer on the field of reparation and apology. As previously mentioned, reparation discourses open up an analytical window, a vantage point to view the most important issues of our time (ie: racial, ethnic, gender, or class cleavages and oppression). Some advocates of reparation politics maintain that it is the first step in recovering history and fashioning a new equitable collective future (Barkan, 2000; Posner and Vermeule, 2003). Critics counter that discourses of reparation are divisive, retrospective, and that they threaten to widen racial gaps and ethnic fault lines, and generally inflame the body politic. Furthermore, others have leveled the criticism that reparations, including the utterance of an apology, are a part of a larger state sponsored strategy of the "politics of distraction" (Cornthassel and Holder, 2008). These polarized perspectives on reparation symbolize the hotly

contested nature of the field. The following paragraphs will attempt to summarize a sampling of some of the principal positions that have been formulated up to this point within the existing scholarship.

The sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis, author of the groundbreaking work *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation* (1993), is considered to be one of the most comprehensive scholars regarding the dynamics of *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* apologies. Tavuchis is unconcerned with the political aspects of apologies. Rather, he is concerned with apologies' "distinctive moral core" (Nobles, 2003; James, 2008). Tavuchis' work has been so profound within the field of reparation politics partly because he is the first to offer a kind of *sociology of apology*. Instead of exploring apologies within their traditional boundaries, which saw them referred to as a mere account, defense, justification or excuse of a transgression, Tavuchis focuses on apologies' social and relational dynamics. According to Tavuchis, to offer an *authentic*³ apology is to voluntarily declare that "one has no excuse, defense, justification, or explanation for an action (or inaction) that has insulted, failed, injured or wronged another" (Tavuchis, 1991: 17). Tavuchis stresses that offering an apology and having it rejected because it merely provided another account of the transgression, and thus fails at being authentic, signals a moral turning point in a relationship. The usefulness of Tavuchis in our conversation is most sharply found in his distinction between interpersonal "one-to-one" apologies and delegated "many-to-many" apologies. The significance of his contributions will be more heavily weighed in the second chapter.

Undoubtedly drawing from Tavuchis' work, sociologist John Torpey forwards a

³ "Authentic apologies" are to be revisited and more robustly discussed in Chapter 2.

more measured and critical perspective on reparation politics. Even though Torpey argues that the international trend of reparation bespeaks the “dawning of a new phase in relations between states and the group that has been victimized” (Torpey, 2001: 335), he is concerned that historically marginalized groups are ignoring other more revealing critiques of the state with a preoccupation with past injustices and their emancipatory possibilities. He argues that in this new postsocialist and postutopian age we find ourselves without any plausible vision of a better future, and because of this absence, our communal gaze has reoriented itself from the future, to the past, in order to grapple with the challenge of making “whole what has been smashed” (2001:343). Torpey argues that the communal gaze of the West has moved from a future orientation, which was largely based on class oriented critiques of capitalism and the struggle for class upliftment, to a past orientation which more commonly struggles with identity claims based on race, ethnicity and other group formations that embody more politically salient referents. Therefore, even though Torpey admits that reparation politics can be a useful discourse in regards to *coming to terms with the past*, he is concerned with its unintended ramifications and how reparation discourses have the tendency to obscure macro-processes of domination. Broadly speaking, Torpey views contemporary identity-based reparation movements as symbolizing a distraction from other movements dedicated to material changes in the lives of the oppressed. Moreover, the political commitment and galvanized energies put into reparation politics, such as the 2008 apology, symbolize the demise of class analysis and the critiques of capitalism's cultural and economic system of values.

Another seminal scholar on apology is Elazar Barkan; he is one of the most often

cited scholars on global reparation and is the author of the ground breaking work *The Guilt of Nations* (2000). His scholarship forwards a mostly optimistic view of what reparation politics can do for both national and international narratives and its actors, and places the discourses within a new burgeoning field of international morality, or what he calls “neo-Enlightenment morality” (2000). Barkan argues that this new morality, which sees individual human rights applied to group formations, provides both victim and perpetrator with an opportunity when attempting to amend historical injustices; the process can “fuse polarized antagonistic histories into a core of shared history to which both sides can subscribe” (Barkan, 2000: 349). A historical example of this approach occurred after WWII when Polish and German teachers and historians met in a series of meetings in efforts to revise school textbooks of both countries so that the narratives being taught regarding the happenings of the twentieth-century would be interpreted by both nations’ children in a manner mutually acceptable to the former antagonists (Barkan, 2000: xxii). This *middle ground* is the site where both *sides* of the historical injustice are able to negotiate, reinterpret, and build a new and shared historical narrative. Barkan also contends that official apologies often lead to a broader consciousness of the issue or disruption, and the official acknowledgment of this guilt can subsequently pave the way for more substantive and concrete remedies such as financial compensation or symbolic gestures. In short, Barkan argues that reparation and apology are mechanisms that can be transformative in nature for both contending groups.

Departing sharply from the previous scholars are Jeff Corntassel and Cindy Holder in their article “Who’s Sorry Now? Government Apologies, Truth Commission, and Indigenous Self-Determination in Australia, Canada, Guatemala, and Peru” (2008).

They successfully position political apologies within a colonial context. Their analysis, which stands from a vantage point of Indigenous self-determination and decolonization, sees the record of apologies in Canada and Australia (both settler states) as being a part of a larger strategy of “the politics of distraction” (2008). Corntassel and Holder argue that the process of apology and reparations has failed to transform relations between Indigenous communities and the state because the latter has remained mute on the most critical discussion for Indigenous reconciliation: the return of homeland and sovereignty over natural resources. They argue that an apology, even when combined with genuine reconciliation, cannot acknowledge Indigenous peoples’ inherent powers of self-determination because of the state’s refusal to go beyond “ideals of national unity and modernization” (2008: 19). They conclude that in order to counter the state-based strategies of promoting unity, prioritizing citizenship, and implementing “cheap reconciliation strategies” (Corntassel and Holder, 2008: 3), there needs to be a larger insurgent education movement that promotes awareness about Indigenous histories and about the ongoing *struggle* for relationships to their homelands and self-determination strategies. Simply said, from their viewpoint political apologies deflect and distract committed political energies away from more transformative political projects of decolonization and Indigenous liberation and towards projects that further entrench state dominance.

The varying discourses found in apology and reparation scholarship are, of course, not homogenous or agreed upon. This should not be surprising; each apology that has been issued has occurred within its own unique sociopolitical environment, where prevailing relations of power have molded and shaped the process and the subsequent

interpretations, outcomes and critiques. Thus, from each apology comes a unique set of circumstances and variables; some see apologies as mechanisms that lay down the path for some kind of future oriented *middle ground*, transformation, or emancipation, while others see apologies as coercive and divisive mechanisms that fail to do much other than perpetuate the power imbalances that led to the initial, and continuing, violence. While avoiding the temptation for closure, for now the perspective of this thesis remains mostly dubious yet still hopeful regarding the potential of political apologies in Canada's *colonial* context.

Three International Examples of Apology

Now that a brief primer of some of the principal positions on reparation politics has been completed, the following, in accordance with Torpey's conceptual framework of "reparation," will now concentrate more carefully on the subsection of reparation that is of most concern for this forum: official political apologies. To help reveal both the political significance of apologies and the work that can be performed through their moral discourse, and to understand the sites of contestation that exist regarding official apologies, a brief international comparative analysis will be performed. This brief overview of specific reparation cases will help position Canada's 2008 apology within the international arena of reparation. Examining past international apologies and their political outcomes will help reveal that apologies are not just neutral political mechanisms, but complex political tools that, when taken seriously, can reveal the defining power relationships of a body politic. Said another way, political apologies do

not provide a sure route to just one political end. Apologies are rather highly contextual tools that, depending on how they are picked up, framed, and deployed, can push certain political projects forward, maneuver projects in a different direction, or delegitimize them all together.

Before we begin our readings of the following international examples we must first make ourselves aware of the interpretive nature of official apologies; to do this we must familiarize ourselves with philosopher J.L. Austin's work, *How To Do Things With Words* (1962). In this seminal work, Austin explores how certain uses of language seem to, by their very utterance, perform an act; when we *say* something we also *do* something. He solidifies his argument by distinguishing three categorical groups of "actions" that are performed when a statement is uttered. They include: 1) the *locutionary act*; 2) the *illocutionary act*; and 3) *the perlocutionary act* (1962). The *locutionary act* is the simple performance of an utterance and refers to the surface meaning of the statement. The *illocutionary act*, being more than just the surface meaning of a statement, involves what Austin calls "conventional consequence" (1962: 103), as in the utterance's conveyance of a right, commitment or obligation. For example, when a person says "I do" (take this person to be my lawful wedded partner), the speaker is making it clear that the act being performed is not just a simple speech utterance but also an act of promise and commitment. Lastly, the *perlocutionary effect*, being more than just surface meaning or the conveyance of a commitment, is in some sense external to the performer; it refers to the effect the statement has on the external *audience*. Even though Austin's threefold formulation will be utilized throughout this paper, this project will not employ an Austinian analysis. Following in his spirit, however, the question that this thesis will

explore is not just what the 2008 apology *said*, but what political work did it actually *do* in Canada's colonial context.

Even though our discussion is acutely aware of political apologies' potential to be sites of meaningful political struggle and contestation, our analytical gaze intends to dig deeper and look more critically at the hegemonic structures that act to *restrict* the range of political options open to the 2008 apology's leverage. To further explain, it is agreed that political apologies, like most other things when it comes to politics, cannot terminate debates in their entirety; nor can they be described in totalizing terms: because of the uncontrollable *perlocutionary effects* of political apologies they are, rather, open frontiers capable of a multitude of interpretations, readings, and uses. Furthermore, as suggested by Austin, even though the most powerful actors in a political apology, such as the apologizing party, may strategically design an apology to evoke a particular set of feelings, emotions, thoughts, or actions, they are incapable of controlling the *perlocutionary effects* of the statement. Therefore, according to this perspective, the apologizing party can only be the archetypes of a dominant interpretation of a political apology.

But, even though apologies can be picked up, interpreted, and used in a multitude of ways, the postcolonial lens of this thesis is defined by its high sensitivity to the intertwined and often coded relationships of power that largely determine how a political apology is defined, framed and understood. Simply put, political apologies do not take place in political vacuums. Austin's assertions are broadly correct, but what Austin's analysis fails to illuminate is the overarching and salient power relations that both frame and define political apologies. When exploring both political apologies and their

principal actors (including state actors, media organizations, and other social actors such as Indigenous advocacy groups) we must be cautious not to fall into a soft relativism where it is assumed that all meanings and political interpretations of a political apology garner the same level of broad attention, respect or legitimization. Gesturing back to Thucydides' maxim, political apologies still occur in a world where *Othered* minority groups are marginalized and dominated not by accident but through historical processes that have resulted in their inequitable access to power, privilege and resources.

Therefore, when exploring political apologies we must be attentive to the overarching sets of power relationships that act to amplify and legitimate certain meanings/interpretations while at the same time marginalizing and dismissing others.

Through the process of exploring both the framing strategies and the dominant interpretation of an apology statement, an opportunity is provided to elucidate hegemonic discourses, structures of domination, intent and strategies, and the sociopolitical relationships of the participants involved.

Keeping all of this in mind, the following samples of international political apologies display a dramatically wide range of possible outcomes and examples of how apologies have been used in the past. The case studies are the 1952 German apology to Jews, the struggle of black Americans for an apology for slavery, and the recent "Stolen Generation" apology experience for Australia's Indigenous peoples. Respectively, these case studies represent three *dominant* apology contexts: 1) an apology that was sought, offered, and then picked up by the victim group and strategically used to move a historical political project forward; 2) an apology that was sought but not offered; and 3) an apology experience that has been used by the state as an *intended* terminating

mechanism for future claims of injustice against the state. Let us begin.

The genocidal atrocities that occurred during WWII are at “the heart of current worldwide proliferation of demands for reparation” (Torpey, 2001: 335). The German reparation experience and apology to its Jewish victims hold a special position within reparation politics because they are a seminal example of the kind of powerful outcome apologies can produce. In short, West Germany’s apology to its Jewish victims contributed to the solidification of a massive political project: the creation of the state of Israel. Historically, even before the allied victory was certain, and before the complete horrors of the Nazi concentration camps were fully revealed to the world, Jewish organizations and leaders inside and outside of Germany began to calculate and formulate claims against Germany which *framed* the Jewish victims of the Nazi regime not just as people bound together by religion, but as a people that constituted a nation. This frame articulated that the Jewish people *as a nation* were the victims, and thus the national Jewish community, which was still under British rule and struggling for official recognition in Palestine, was the justified claimant and recipient of any reparations (Barkan, 2000: 5). This framing strategy of the Jewish community as a nation began to construct a new national Jewish identity that fundamentally connected all Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist, together into one national identity. Previously, the Zionist movement was supported by only a small minority of European Jews but after the mass extermination of the majority of Jews in Europe, the distinction between Zionist and non-Zionist Jews was dramatically minimized (Barkan, 2000: 5).

Immediately following the end of the war, these national Jewish claims and demands for financial reparations fell mostly on deaf ears and were generally ignored; the

sociopolitical environment immediately following the war was one that was preoccupied with German victimization, not Jewish victimhood. The small West German package of financial reparations that was initially granted, though, was not pursued for the moral reason of Jewish economic upliftment, but was rather meant to deflect German self-evaluation of guilt; West German reparations to Jews were viewed as a pragmatic response to appease international demands. In essence, West Germany wanted to *look forward* but its acceptance into the international community was predicated on looking into and coming to terms with the past. Any retrospective revisitation of the past, though, was not popular for German politicians or the general German public; therefore immediately after the war, substantial reparations to the Jewish community were not a political priority.

But as time passed, the most significant response to reparation claims came from within Germany itself and soon became a cornerstone of the newly formed Federal Republic (Barkan, 2000: 8). In the early 1950s, the newly elected Chancellor Konrad Adenauer viewed substantial Jewish reparations as “a moral obligation, as well as a pragmatic policy, that would facilitate the acceptance of Germany into the world community” (Barkan, 2000: 8). Adenauer strategically framed his unpopular position by forcefully promoting the realpolitik benefits of a committed policy of substantial Jewish reparations to German elites, while at the same time veiling its practical political significance with a morally infused rhetoric of reconciliation which would appeal to his Jewish audience.

Adenauer, though, was clearly too far ahead of the German public when it came to substantial Jewish reparations. German politicians and the domestic public at this

point focused foremost on German victimization, which did not include Jews; they were not prepared for the political, moral or emotional commitment that would be brought to the foreground by a substantial reparation process. In an attempt to promote popular support and political acceptance of the financial payments that Adenauer so adamantly thought were necessary for Germany's future prosperity and international acceptance, he employed the use of what apology scholars Melissa Nobles and Christian Pross consider to be an “official apology” (Nobles, 2003; Pross, 1999). On 27 September 1952 he acknowledged before the Bundestag the German crimes against the Jews and the obligation to make “moral and material amends”; the acknowledgement of moral obligation and requirement of material restitution had been two of the principal demands issued by the World Jewish Congress in 1949 (Pross, 1999; Wistrich, 2002; Nobles, 2003).

The political apology effectively created channels of communication between the German and Israeli leadership that were non-existent prior to the statement. But most importantly the apology, which was permanently recorded and publicly disseminated, prepared German public opinion for reparations to Israel, a political discourse that the German people were previously not prepared for. The funds acquired through Jewish reparations from Germany would be allocated to the Jewish national community, which went to the creation of a more financially stable Israeli state. In short, the political apology was a speech act that helped to promote acceptance of responsibility within the perpetrator group and it paved the road for reparations and the solidification of support for the state of Israel; something was not just *said*, but *done* (Austin, 1962).

Concrete political facts that can be distilled from this example are that through

successful framing strategies the financial funds to Israel not only helped meet the practical fiduciary necessities of a burgeoning state, but also, and arguably more importantly, aided in the legitimization of the Israeli state within German society and the international community. This shows that apologies cannot be simply and arrogantly dismissed as “Clintonoid psychobabble” (see Reed in Torpey, 2006); the German apology did some very heavy lifting and was successfully used by the victimized group to push forward a historic political project. The German apology illustrates how powerful a political tool it can be: it helped pave a road of intelligibility between political actors so that financial reparations and legitimization of the Israeli state could occur. Through opening channels of communication, which helped explain to the German domestic audience a possible positive relationship with the greater Jewish community, heavy political work was *done*.

The struggle of African Americans for an apology for slavery represents, in our conceptual framework, an apology that was sought but not offered. Let us look back and briefly examine the American experience with slavery reparations. Reparations, including an apology for slavery, have long been on the public agenda in the United States. In the 1950s the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jewish community provided a serious backdrop and opportunity for African American reparation advocates (Belles, 1980). The atrocities of WWII, along with the reparatory claims that followed, were seen by many black civil rights advocates, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, as a political opportunity for civil rights activists in the United States and abroad. As has been previously mentioned, this critical postwar period signaled a new burgeoning era of international morality where international human rights, including domestic civil rights,

gained political saliency and captured the attention of international actors. Du Bois took this postwar opportunity and published his now famous 150 page conference paper, “An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress” (cited in Belles, 1980), where he outlined black grievances related to educational and other types of discrimination, including the mass violation of basic human rights. The document, which later had a profound impact on the development of the United Nations, provided a launching point for reparatory claims for black citizens across the globe. Simply said, the political dynamics of the post-WWII era provided an organizational stage for civil rights advocates to *frame* and contextualize their claims of historical mistreatment in a manner which was becoming increasingly more salient in the international community due to the atrocities of WWII.

In the late 1980s the demand for reparations for slavery in the United States moved from the margins of political discourse within the African American community and into the mainstream (Barkan, 2000: 283). From there, reparation discourses have gradually grown and moved directly into the mainstream politics of broader America, a position of primacy that has led to visceral exchanges, debates and rejections of reparation.⁴ Responses to reparation demands outside the African American community have been mostly negative, as is shown by several national polls concerning the issue of reparations: a March 2002 poll indicates that seventy-one percent of the respondents oppose a government inquiry into possible reparations for slavery (Torpey, 2006: 127). For this reason, argued by notable black political scientist Carol Swain, “talk about

⁴ Though an extreme formulation, for an example of the kind of arguments made to counter reparations for African Americans, see David Horowitz’s 2001 article, “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Blacks is a Bad Idea for Blacks - and Racist Too”.

reparations at the present time is ill-advised and can be positively harmful in terms of improving race relations and garnering support for politics to help the truly distressed. Current reparations talk inflames the white electorate, undermines the bridge-building process across racial lines, [and] fuels nationalist sentiments” (Swain, 2002: 181).

The politics of reparations, though, did heat up during President Bill Clinton’s presidency, in part due to Clinton’s self proclamation that now was the time to heal racial division in the country. Clinton did show substantial political will in meeting this goal of healing racial divisions when the President called for a “national discussion on race” (Nobles, 2003; Barkan, 2000). Even though Clinton initially rejected the possibility of an official apology for slavery, a few months later during his African tour in March of 1998 Clinton did deliver an “unplanned” (Barkan, 2000: 287) statement noting that the United States was “wrong” (ibid) in benefiting from slavery. However, his *personal* statement of regret, which does not carry the moral force nor institutional legitimacy of an official political apology, “stopped short of an explicit apology” (Cunningham, 1999; 286). Some have called his statement a “semi-apology” or a “near apology”, and Melissa Nobles frames it in her scholarship as an “apology asked for but not given” (Nobles, 2003: 7). Clinton acknowledged the evils of slavery while avoiding any statement that could be construed as an apology for slavery in the United States (Barkan, 2000; Swain, 2005).

What can be deduced from this apparent lack of willingness to utter an official apology? In this case maybe a better question is, does an apology that is meaningful and sincere imply a willingness to make reparations in some form? At least one commentator has indicated that Clinton had no wish to become involved in consideration of reparations

either for African American descendants of slaves or debt relief for Africa, and thus an official apology which could signal pending reparatory actions was not appropriate or necessary (Rye, 1998). In short, the dominant interpretation that can be distilled from this American example is that the apparent lack of interest by the head of state to engage in reparatory action for African Americans led Clinton not to offer an official public apology. Yet this did not stop Clinton from taking advantage of his political position and from uttering a *personal statement* of regret, one that may have arguably been politically advantageous for him yet did not commit him to any further and more politically sensitive reparatory actions.

When compared to Chancellor Adenauer's official apology to Jews,⁵ the American example can be seen to be its counterpoint. Adenauer thought it was in Germany's best political interest to provide reparations to the Jewish nation-state; he believed that to better prepare the German domestic public for the explicit financial burdens of reparations, and the implicit struggle with German guilt, an official public apology was needed (Barkan, 2000). Clinton, on the other hand, did not see financial reparations for African Americans to be in the best interest of the United States; subsequently he did not believe that a robust political apology was pertinent. The sociopolitical reasons as to why financial reparations for African Americans are so overtly divisive and contentious within the United States political milieu is multifaceted and outside the scope of this paper. Yet what we can take away from this example is, that unlike Germany, there has been no official apology in the United States. But that is not

⁵ This comparison is not intended to compare the acts committed by the Nazi regime with the acts committed by the United States government regarding the slave trade. This comparison is purely intended to further enlighten the work that official apologies can do, and is not intended to somehow measure either atrocity.

to say that the absence of an official apology precludes any political project from being pushed forward. One reading or interpretation of Clinton's in/action is that the absence of an official apology for slavery both successfully forestalled public preparation for reparations and obstructed any widespread internal self-reflection and struggle by Americans regarding their legacy of state sanctioned slavery. Simply put, the absence of an official apology aided in the political project of retaining the status quo.

Turning away from the American experience, let us now view our last international example of apology: the "Stolen Generation" apology experience for Australia's Indigenous peoples. This apology fits within our conceptual framework as an apology experience that has been used by the state as a terminating mechanism that *intended* to shut the door to further reparatory movement. Australian Aborigines have urged [former] Prime Minister John Howard, leader of the Liberal/National Coalition (conservative) government, to apologize for the state sanctioned policy that began in the early twentieth century that saw the forced removal of thousands of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their parents' care (Nobles, 2003: 2). Howard's steadfast response was that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples should focus on the current disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people, rather than the more "symbolic" aspects of reconciliation such as an apology for past wrongs (Reynolds et al., 2009: 244). As a result, Howard explicitly rejected issuing an official apology and rather introduced a policy of "practical reconciliation" (cited in Reynolds et al., 2009: 244) that focused exclusively on what *his government* saw as the present "practical" (ibid) needs of Indigenous peoples.

In a 1997 speech addressed to the Australian Reconciliation Convention regarding

the federal government's response to the "Stolen Generation" issue, he pushed his "practical" agenda while justifying his refusal to pursue redress measures for past injustices such as an official apology. Howard goes on to say:

"But this optimism, my friends, about the reconciliation process cannot be blind. Reconciliation will not work if it puts a higher value on symbolic gestures and overblown promises rather than practical needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in areas like health, housing, education and employment. It will not work if it is premised solely on a sense of national guilt and shame. Rather we should acknowledge past injustices and focus our energies on addressing the root causes of current and future disadvantage among our Indigenous people." (cited in Reynolds et al., 2009: 247).

Howard's forceful rejection and dismissal of the importance of coming to terms with past injustices and their legacy is sharply depicted in his speech; he attempted to make the *practical* aspects of reconciliation incompatible with the *symbolic* components (ie: apology). Furthermore, the subsequent actions of the Howard government portrayed those who argued that apology was a fundamental aspect of the reconciliation process as being opponents of real reconciliation seeking to "undermine national unity" (cited in Augoustine & LeCouteur, 2004). Gunstone and Short have further argued that as a result of Howard's policy, the "rights and needs of Indigenous peoples have been 'mainstreamed' to equal those of 'all Australians', with little recognition of Indigenous history, the past injustice, and particularly its legacy in the present" (cited in Reynolds, 2009: 247).

One interpretation of the Australian struggle for an official apology for past injustices is that it provides an example of a colonial state's strategy of delegitimization and assimilation. The reasonings forwarded by the Howard government as to why they refused to apologize for the state policy known as the "Stolen Generation" proved to be a terminating mechanism for further claims of inequality against the state made by

Australia's Indigenous peoples. The government's policy attempted to erase the historical unequal intergroup relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and it perpetuated the power imbalances that led to the initial, and continuing, colonial violence. Furthermore, Howard's strategy attempted to equalize the citizenship status of Indigenous peoples by framing the financial resources that were spent as part of the "practical" reconciliation policy as simple financial expenditures; it was a matter of public policy and not financial reparations for a past injustice. Framing the financial resources as mere public policy expenditures legitimated a set of political actions and projects that differ from the political actions that would be legitimated if they were framed as being a part of a reparation package. Simply said, from the vantage point of this research, the political project that the Howard government pushed forward via its non-apology and "practical" reconciliation measures was a policy of "assimilation that placed the onus of responsibility far more on Indigenous peoples than on governments" (Dodson, 2006; McCausland, 2005).

Similar to the reparatory experience of the United States, Australia's apology experience signals the importance of an apology's *perlocutionary effects*. Even though the state actors and media organizations hold substantial powers when it comes to a political apology's interpretation and meaning, it does not mean that the struggle for reparation or apology is necessarily doomed to follow such a pre-designed path. The Australian case is an example of how an apology denial can be picked up and used by apology activists to move reparation projects forward in the face of hostile government intentions. In fact, on 12 February 2008 Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered an official apology for "The Stolen Generation": "We apologize for the laws and policies

of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians” (CBC, 2008: February 12). Due, in part, to the previous government's transparent bad faith and obvious assimilationist intent, Australian reparation activists arguably became further emboldened and successfully attained their apology; the reparation frontier remains open.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has both provided a primer on some of the principal positions within reparation politics, and has presented a set of international examples to illustrate the wide array of political work apologies have historically done. It has been argued that apologies have done some very heavy lifting and have successfully pushed forward certain political projects, maneuvered certain projects in a different direction, and delegitimized others all together. In Germany, through both Adenauer's support for reparations and the *strategic framing* of the Jewish community, a project that both financially and morally created the state of Israel was pushed forward; it proved to be a realpolitik maneuver which aided in Germany's acceptance into the newly forming international community. The American experience provides an example of the kind of political work that can be accomplished even in the absence of an official apology: the absence successfully forestalled public preparation for reparations and it obstructed any widespread internal self reflection and struggle by Americans regarding their legacy of state sanctioned slavery. And lastly, the Australian experience provides an example of how official apologies can work within a colonial context. Howard's practical reconciliation policy impeded the work of Indigenous activists by attempting to erase the

historical unequal intergroup relationship of domination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

These international examples have helped illustrate that the scholarly field of official political apologies is no longer an abstract burgeoning phenomenon that can only be spoken about in “advent” terms. Apologies are here and they are shaping our political environment and the methods in which people and governments are channelling their political energy and resources. In order to move this discussion forward, the next task of this wider research project will be to properly introduce and position Canada’s 2008 apology. While we still remain largely dubious regarding political apology’s transformative potential in a colonial context, a position in part informed by Australia’s experience with its political apology, by carefully exploring the nuances of Canada’s 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors we hope to reveal both its political significance in future oriented discussions and the kind of political work it has accomplished under its guise of morality.

Chapter 2

Introduction

The previous chapter attempted to both lay out the theoretical ground work of reparation scholarship and to briefly investigate how other state experiences with political apologies have helped to transform, or conversely, helped to re-entrench prevailing social relationships and political regimes. Now that a major segment of the project's theoretical underpinnings has been introduced, this next chapter intends to move forward and employ a more nuanced analysis of the 2008 apology *itself* in hopes of revealing both its defining qualities and political robustness. More specifically this chapter intends to explore the apology's ceremonial components that have in large part distinguished it from the sullied 1998 "Statement of Reconciliation". This chapter also intends to measure the apology's authenticity in hopes of asking what contemporary reconciliation potential it offers. By taking into account the distinctive ceremonial components of the apology and by measuring the apology's authenticity and robustness, this chapter intends to judge Canada's 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors.

In order to achieve these goals, this chapter will begin with a brief history of Canada's Indian residential schools. This brief introduction will not only include a history of the schools themselves but also an exploration of the political struggles that preceded the official apology of 2008. Presenting a historical background is essential to understanding the scope and magnitude of both the schools and the forms of violence perpetrated at the institutions; a retrospective analysis will both elucidate the nature of the abuses committed and will reveal the colonial logic that justified their perpetration and

continuation till the end of the twentieth century. This discussion will in part satisfy the exploration of the apology's *locutionary act*, being the performance and initial surface meaning of an utterance (for more see Austin, 1962). By laying out the apology's *locutionary act* it will enable our discussion to then move forward to explore both the apology's *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary acts*. Furthermore, by outlining the "genocidal intent" (Claes and Clifton, 1998) of the schools, the responsibility of Canada's governing regime and institutions, both of which are implicated in colonialism, will be sharply revealed.

Once this introductory task has been satisfied, our attention will then move to our main area of concern. In an attempt to measure the apology's authenticity we will weigh the 2008 apology against the framework of criteria formulated by notable reparation scholars such as political scientist Matt James (2008) and sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis (1991). Apologetic authenticity commands our attention not because of any concerns for emotional conveyance or determination of any true or genuine emotional authenticity, but rather because of an official apology's collective and delegated nature. This distinction will become clearer later in our discussion, but for now it is important to understand that this forum is interested not with the social and emotional dynamics of one-to-one or interpersonal apologetic utterances but rather the political nuances and performative components of delegated intrapersonal official apologies which see national governments "assume an apologetic posture" (James, 2008: 16) before historically wronged groups in acknowledgment of its participation in past injustices. Said another way, while the former refers to apologies made by individual agents representing themselves as the transgressor or transgressed, the latter deals with apologies whose principals are not

individual agents representing themselves but rather “official attendants, executants, agents or emissaries” (Tavuchis, 1991: 98).

Because of political apology's performative nature, where *actions* speak just as loud as *words*, we will be employing a set of criteria designed to capture and measure the apology's authenticity and robustness. Our set of criteria will ask questions such as: is the apology recorded in official writing; does it name the wrongs in question without demanding forgiveness; does it accept responsibility and regret while at the same time promising non-repetition; and does it earnestly engage with the wronged group through acts of ceremony or financial reparations (James, 2008: 4; also see Tavuchis, 1991). This final criterion is of paramount concern for this chapter. The distinctive ceremonial aspects of the 2008 apology are central and defining components of the apologetic occasion and will be fulsomely explored and analyzed. The ceremonial components of the apology deserve our careful attention due to both their unprecedented nature in Canadian history and because of the obvious priority given to them by the involved actors.

Ceremony plays a critical role in political apologies: even if the political will is present to make substantive amends and to initiate some form of meaningful reconciliation, an inappropriate ceremony or botched apology, no matter the preexistence of any good intentions, almost assures the preclusion of any such reconciliatory projects from moving forward. This may be partly due to political apologies being perceived as having a “moral core” (Tavuchis, 1991); because of its *moral* position in reparation politics, an inappropriate or botched apology may be perceived as tantamount to both disrespecting the wronged group and the institution of political apology as a whole. In

conclusion, if the goals of this chapter are attained, it will help us then to go on to judge Canada's 2008 apology by revealing the apology's authenticity and subsequent political employment and saliency within contemporary politics.

Canada's 2008 Apology to Indian Residential School Survivors: A Brief Overview

*"... if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young"*⁶

Even before the genesis of Canada's Indian residential schools, the use of education as a weapon of oppression and violence had a long and fulsome legacy in world and colonial history. According to Roland Chrisjohn et al., in their book *The Circle Game: Shadow and Substance in the Residential School Experience in Canada* (1997), the historical role of public education in Western civilization was inextricably bound to three pillars: "religion (so that the common people could appreciate doctrinal disputes), political movements (so that the "common **man**" might be given the appearance of some small role in the body politic), and modernity (so that people might become useful, interchangeable components of an industrial order)" (1997: 82). Such motives for public education as an oppressive and colonizing force were first employed to pacify and domesticate women; historical forms of residential schools targeted women with both secular and religious 'education' which intended to teach women their "proper place" so that they could become "fit consorts" (Chrisjohn et al., 2006: 82; Sonnet, 1993).

Leaving commonly employed narratives aside, the policy of forced education via residential schools in countries such as Canada and Australia did not have as its goal the

⁶ N.F. Davin: Commissioner for the Canadian report on Native industrial schools in the United States. For more see: Haig-Brown (1988: 26)

broadening of its pupils' intellectual horizons, but rather "the inculcation of the images Europeans carried of themselves and of the oppressing *into* the oppressed" (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 86). Said another way, Canada's residential schools were an integral component of colonization and a sanctioned policy of the Government of Canada. The school's strategy, which was acknowledged and vocalized by Prime Minister Harper during the apology, was to "kill the Indian in the child" (Canada, 2008). Residential schools saw the forced removal of over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and their homelands (Canada, 2008). This official government policy of assimilation created institutions that coercively, often through physical and sexual abuses, required children to unlearn their languages and their cultural teachings. The Law Commission of Canada, a now defunct federal advisory body, described the schools as "total institutions" (Claes and Clifton, 1998; also see Goffman, 1961) and concluded that they in fact reflected a "genocidal intent" (ibid) in their mission to expose Aboriginal children to "abuses perpetrated with the explicit goal of eradicating Native ways" (ibid).

According to Claes and Clifton's paper prepared for the Law Commission of Canada, residential school policies recognized that language and family ties, embodying as they do the foundations of culture, spirituality and historical bonds, were key in the maintenance of distinct Aboriginal nations (Claes and Clifton, 2008). These interwoven bonds, which are the components of cultural reproduction, and intergenerational transmission and maintenance, were what residential schools intended to permanently sever. The strategy to do so was clearly articulated by Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott, the head of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932:

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand

alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill [referring to Indian Residential Schools](Miller, 2005: 35).

In 1920, under Scott's direction, it became mandatory for all Aboriginal children between the ages of seven and fifteen to attend one of Canada's Indian residential schools (Miller, 2005: 169; also see Morse, 2008:). The government made an agreement with four of the major Canadian Christian churches to administer the schools: Methodist (now the United Church of Canada), Presbyterian and Anglican, in addition to several Roman Catholic orders (most notably the Oblates) (Llewellyn, 2002: 1; Miller, 1996). The Federal government was responsible for funding and setting general policy for the school system, while the church organizations generally oversaw day-to-day operations. Canada's last residential school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996 (Corntassel & Holder, 2008: 8).

The stories of the survivors, which reveal the schools' strategies of assimilation and genocide, began to be uncovered and publicly disseminated through the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) and through the thousands of civil suits filed by former students (Llewellyn, 2002). These bodies and processes revealed that the 'education' offered at the schools was more than just the supposed training of the mind in Eurocentric modes of thought, but also the strict deprivation of both any kind of cultural stimuli or relational connection with family or homeland. By forcibly replacing both the habits and feelings of their ancestors with the acquired language, arts, and customs of the 'civilized' world, the students were effectively weaned from any connection to *home* (Haig-Brown, 1988: 25). The coercive strategies became

increasingly successful when they were paired with the traumatic separation of the children from their parents, the enforcement of a strict separation of siblings within the schools, the initiation of haircuts, the issuing of uniform clothing, the constant coldness of dormitories along with the lack of nighttime care for small children, and the censorship of communication (Claes and Clifton, 2008: 26). Once the children were secluded from any external source of cultural or parental support, the already genocidal abuses were exacerbated by rampant physical, sexual and psychological abuses.

It is impossible in this forum to give appropriate justice to the multitude of traumas endured by Aboriginal children in residential schools, yet to better understand both the systematic abuses endured by the children and the severe intergenerational ramifications they had, we must continue our investigation. According to the testimony heard and recorded by RCAP, for speaking their native language children were punished by “sticking needles through [their] tongues, often leaving them in place for extended periods of time” and “beating [them] into unconsciousness” (RCAP, 1996; Chrisjohn et al., 1997) which often resulted in serious permanent harm or death of the child. According to Roland Chrisjohn et al., other abuses included: arranging or inducing abortions in female children impregnated by men in authority using electric shock devices on physically restrained children; forced labour; and forcing sick children to eat their own vomit (1997). RCAP recorded that “children were frequently beaten severely with whips, rods, and fists, chained and shackled, bound hand and foot and locked in closets, basements, and bathrooms, and had their heads shaved or hair closely cropped” (1997: 369). Furthermore, the Commission documented numerous cases of severe abuse in which no action by government was ever taken against the perpetrators in spite of

protests by inspectors and Indian agents (1997: 368-373).

In exploring these dramatic traumas we must be cautious of two things: 1) not to pervert our analytical gaze into a kind of colonial voyeurism; and 2) not to let the more egregious acts of violence overshadow the more coded miseries of the everyday. Even though the dramatic traumas experienced at the schools may be more effective in forcing an appreciation that the schools reflect “a deliberate infliction of harm upon the group’s condition of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”,⁷ we should not forget the day-to-day, relentless, well thought out, and long practiced policies of abuse achieved at the schools. Referring back to the Law Commission of Canada’s assertion that the schools were in fact “total institutions”, a term coined by the famous sociologist Erving Goffman (1961), it reveals that the schools represented much more than just grotesque torture chambers capable of dramatic physical, sexual and psychological harms. Of course it goes without mention that such acts are abhorrent in and of themselves, but they were not the only forms of violence committed at the institutions. As Goffman articulates in *Asylums*, “total institutions” are social engineering institutions that “wall off” their populations from the outside world, “break down” the cultural and political barriers of work, sleep and play, and construct and enforce an extreme power disparity between their populations and staff (cited in Chrisjohn et al., 2006: 88; also see Goffman, 1961).

Furthermore, even though the more gruesome abuses may be more commonly known and appealing for citation, Goffman argues that the staff’s near absolute control of

⁷ For more see: the United Nations Convention on Genocide. <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>.

the psychological and physical environment in the *total institution* made it possible for much more to be perpetrated than just episodic and violent incursions against its population (1961). It is argued that the schools acted as an institutional nexus of a kind of epistemic violence, where children's bodies were not the only mediums under siege, but their established conception of themselves (made possible by certain social arrangements in their home community), their modes of thinking and knowing, along with their world views and patterns of knowledge were also being actively obliterated. Simply said, the schools acted as government sanctioned sites that allowed the colonizer to "begin a series of abasements, degradation, humiliation, and profanation of self" (Goffman, 1962: 14). Such processes of debasement and mortification did not only intend to *kill the Indian in the child*, but were also integral components of European imperialism and colonization intended to create a colonial docile subject that would offer "no intellectual or spiritual challenge to its oppressors, who might provide some limited service to its masters...and would learn its place on the margins of Canadian society" (Chrisjohn et al., 2006: 94). Through the pervasive violence of 'education', the schools effectively symbolized what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls "the reach of imperialism into our heads" (1999: 23).

The Road to Apology

The road to the 2008 apology has been a long journey for the school's survivors and other Aboriginal activists who have struggled for justice. As previously mentioned, one of the first documented forums where large numbers of people had the opportunity to

volunteer and gather information about the lived experiences at residential schools was RCAP. The commission, which heard the testimony of 1,623 Aboriginal speakers, 591 individuals and the representatives of 1,032 organizations between April 1992 and April 1994, published its final 3,546 page report in 1996 (76 pages of which reviewed the objectives and effects of government policy regarding the schools) (Morse, 2008: 280-2; Claes and Clifton, 1998: 55). RCAP's final report, and the recommendations made within, are thought to be the officializing vehicles that first sparked an expectation of the Canadian Government to "begin to remedy historic damage done to First Nations" (Claes and Clifton, 1998: 55).

The recommendations formulated in RCAP's final report included: the need to inform the larger society about the disastrous effects of the school; the need to discuss residential schools and why they happened; the need to examine and complete records on the kidnappings of children; and lastly, the need for a public record, an official apology, and financial compensation (1996). Stemming from RCAP's recommendation for an official apology, other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations amplified the need for a full admission of responsibility for residential schools. Most notably in their 1994 publication "Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals", the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and its then leader Phil Fontaine, who attended a residential school himself, demanded reparatory action and an official apology (Morse, 2008: 282). The federal government had further pressure to issue an official apology once many church organizations began to issue official apologies of their own in the 1980s for their participation in residential schools. Further pressure was added when a federal Member

of Parliament stood in the House of Commons in 1990 to call for a national inquiry, and in 1992 when British Columbian First Nation chiefs began to publicly demand reparatory action from the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs (Morse, 2008: 283).

Focusing now more carefully on the apology component of these recommendations, our conversation moves forward to 1998 when the federal government, only after multiple governmental and independent organizations and representational bodies called for both a public inquiry and an official apology, released a set of policy recommendations that were “designed to facilitate an end point to [the government’s] historic and legal liabilities regarding residential school survivors” (Corntassel and Holder, 2008: 9). A part of the government’s 1998 response to RCAP’s final report, which came 14 months after the report was issued, was the unveiling of *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan*, which from Corntassel’s and Holder’s perspective represents a policy-based approach intended to address Canada’s culpability in the creation and administration of the schools (2008: 9). According to the Canadian Bar Association the strategies found within *Gathering Strength* failed to “attain its objectives” (2005) in part due to the dispute resolution system which was based on the narrow ground of tort law and related notions of harm (ibid). Furthermore, the AFN reported that the program “caused further harm to claimants,” arguing that the daunting task of completing a 40 page application form which required detailed information of every act of abuse that happened to the claimant as a child, had caused further psychological violence by causing the victim to “trigger” (which is to suffer trauma by remembering or reliving past abuses) (AFN, 2004: s18.1).

The government's 1998 response regarding an *official apology*, though, is our area of primary concern. The first official statement of regret by the Government of Canada regarding its involvement in the schools was at a 1998 lunchtime ceremony held in a government side room in Ottawa, where then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Jane Stewart rose to present a "Statement of Reconciliation" (Cornassel and Holder, 2008; James, 2008). Through the use of ambiguous, non-descriptive, and guarded language the Minister presented her carefully worded statement that in the end failed to admit federal government responsibility. The following is the only excerpt from the Minister's statement that explicitly offered any form of an apology:

"The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry" (quoted in James, 2008: 8).

While surely bringing some form of cathartic relief to some survivors, the Statement failed to satisfy both the members of the community for which the apology was supposedly intended and individuals from other organizations who believed a robust official apology was needed. The dissatisfaction of many, most notably Aboriginal leaders, centered around the apology's wording, meaning and intent, and also the nature of delivery. As noted by political scientist Matt James, "the Statement did not admit that the purpose of the residential-schools policy was forcibly to assimilate Aboriginal peoples" (2008: 8). Furthermore the apology failed to "acknowledge the devastating, ongoing effects, including mental illness, alcoholism, and family breakdown, that can be traced back to the schools" (James, 2008: 8). And most importantly, if an authentic

apology is supposed to voluntarily convey the “offender's unambiguous and regretful willingness to own the consequences of [their] actions” (James, 2008: 2; also see Tavuchis, 1991: 17), then the 1998 apology also failed in this regard. The Statement failed to “say sorry for either the intentions behind the policy or for any aspect of its impact beyond the actual instances of physical and sexual abuse” (James, 2008: 8).

Due to a multiple of factors, including the poorly received apology, the failure to achieve more material reparations, and the general consensus that the government’s policies in *Gathering Strength* had failed, the struggle of Aboriginal groups and individuals seeking justice moved forward. We now turn our attention to May 2006. In response to numerous class action claims involving over 12,000 individual litigants, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) was signed by the Government of Canada, the AFN, regional Inuit representatives, the four churches who once administered the schools, and the lawyers involved in the numerous negotiations (Morse, 2008: 203). The agreements included financial compensation in the form of the Common Experience Payment to the direct victims of the schools and the family members of deceased victims only if the former student was alive as of 30 May 2005 (Morse, 2008: 284). Additional compensation was provided depending on the level of physical and sexual abuse, the time spent at the schools, and the living claimant’s age (Morse, 2008: 284).

The agreement also established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whose mandate acknowledged that “there is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth telling and reconciliation process is a part of an overall holistic and

comprehensive response to the Indian Residential School legacy” (IRSTRC: 2006). Even though the IRSSA did eventually offer a framework where the official apology of 2008 was negotiated and offered, the original 2006 agreement was silent regarding an official apology. The Government of Canada, in fact, announced in April of the same year that no apology would be forthcoming (Morse, 2008: 205).

In order to explore apologetic authenticity, we now arrive at the 2008 apology. At this point, the reason as to why the government of Canada decided to reverse its original decision not to offer an official apology regarding its responsibility for residential schools is still cloudy and is an avenue of further research. Some observers, though, such as legal scholar Bradford W. Morse, posit that the apparent change of heart may be due to the fact that the 2008 apology was only offered by the government *after* the opt-out period for financial compensation had expired, which was 20 August 2007 (2008: 205). In addition, it could be in part due to the change of government that took place 6 February 2006, which saw Paul Martin’s Liberal Party ousted by Stephen Harper’s Conservative Party of Canada. Either way, on 11 June 2008 now Prime Minister Harper apologized in the House of Commons to Aboriginal peoples for the mistreatment of Aboriginal school children in government sanctioned residential schools.⁸

Exploring Apologetic Authenticity

Before we begin exploring the details of the 2008 apology, we must first discuss how and why an apology's authenticity is worth measuring and exploring. When

⁸ For full text of apology (official Hansard), see appendix.

understanding an apology's authenticity one does not refer to the act of somehow gauging the emotional commitment or condition of the apologetic speaker. This kind of introspective judgment of an apologizer's emotional state is not the avenue of exploration that is typically pursued in the case of delegated political apologies because of their representative nature, where one collective apologizes to another. Because of the collective and delegated nature of what Tavuchis calls a "many-to-many" (1991) apology, apologetic authenticity is rather concerned with more performative components. Tavuchis' arguments are useful in understanding apologies in our contemporary and political context because of his comprehensive outline of the distinctive characteristics and dynamics of intrapersonal and interpersonal apologies. Intrapersonal apologies are distinct from interpersonal apologies in that the latter refers to apologies made by individual agents representing themselves as the transgressor or transgressed, while the former deals with apologies whose principals are not individual agents representing themselves but rather "official attendants, executants, agents or emissaries" (Tavuchis, 1991: 98). Political collectives, such as the state or ethnic and racial groups, cannot strictly 'act' like an individual; they are forced to speak through some kind of representative. This unique category of apology, where there are "emergent entities with characteristics that set them apart from individuals functioning as sovereign actors," demands special consideration and treatment when compared to its interpersonal counterpart. Due to the collective and delegated nature of the 2008 apology, where representatives of the state and Aboriginal organizations spoke for their 'collectives', Tavuchis' intrapersonal framework of apology will command our attention.

Seeing that it is analytically difficult to measure the conveyance of true genuine

collective remorse, how does one measure the authenticity of an apology between two collectives? Political scientist Matt James in his article “Wrestling with the Past: Apologies, Quasi-Apologies, and Non- Apologies in Canada” (2008), explores this question and subsequently provides a convincing distillation of criteria for measuring the authenticity of a collective or intrapersonal apology. Through carefully parsing out the requirements noted by other scholars, James compiles a focused set of eight critical components (for more see Tavuchis, 1991; Alter, 1999; Martha Minow, 1998; Janet Bavelas, 2004; Mark Gibney and Erik Roxstrom, 2001). The eight components of an authentic intrapersonal apology include: “1) recorded officially in writing; 2) names the wrongs in question; 3) accepts responsibility; 4) states regret; 5) promises non-repetition; 6) does not demand forgiveness; 7) is not hypocritical or arbitrary; and 8) undertakes – through measures of publicity, ceremony and concrete reparation – to both morally engage those in whose name apology is made and to assure the wronged group that the apology is sincere” (James, 2008: 4). James argues that this set of criteria paves a road that can: evaluate the robustness of particular instances of political apology; distinguish between qualitatively different instances of apology; and evaluate the moral consistency of the cumulative apology records of particular states (2008: 4).

Seeing that James’ article has already explored and evaluated the Canadian federal government’s cumulative apology record in a manner which does not need revisiting at this time, the seventh criterion (which would explore the nation’s consistency in their apology output and behavior) will be dropped from the scope of this chapter. Instead, this chapter will more fulsomely examine the ceremonial nature and novel occasion that the 2008 apology offered. How, then, does Canada’s 2008 apology stand up to this

distilled set of criteria? Where does the 2008 apology sit in this framework? Exploring these questions will hopefully lead to a judgement of the 2008 apology. Using James' terminology, is the 2008 apology a true apology, a quasi-apology, or a non-apology (James, 2008)? Finally, depending on where the 2008 apology is positioned, what bearing does it have on contemporary politics - what does it reveal? Let us begin.

The first criterion demands that the apology be recorded officially in writing. Previous to the 2008 apology, Canada's declaration to Japanese Canadians for its involvement in the forced removal and deportation of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent during WWII, along with Canada's apology for the infamous Chinese head tax, were the only apologies recorded officially in permanent form. This criterion is paramount: once the novel and often emotional apologetic proceedings have concluded, the permanency of the official record allows subsequent scrutinization which could alter the judgment of the apology's authenticity and robustness. This is not to say that a written official record is a mandatory component for all individuals. There are surely survivors of the above injustices who are unconcerned with how the apology was recorded. The point is, rather, that due to the "magical [and] mystifying aura" (James: 2008: 16) created by the state assuming an "apologetic posture" (ibid), people may become overwhelmed or distracted and miss out on specific elements of the apology. Having the apology recorded into official record can thus help activists and other observers to go back and take full account of the occasion. In fact, the government's 1998 "Statement of Reconciliation" was in part tarnished and poorly received due to its lack of permanency; the statement was not permanently recorded and it did not form a part of official legal or parliamentary record but was merely posted on the Indian and

Northern Affairs' website (Corntassel and Holder, 2008; James, 2008: 17). In contrast, the 2008 apology was officially recorded into parliamentary record creating what now AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo calls "a permanent record [that] will be told 100 years from now" (cited in O'Neill, 2008: A.1). Our first criterion is thus satisfied.

The second criterion is the act of naming the wrongs in question. To recall, the initial 1998 Statement has been broadly criticized for its use of "very nondescript and guarded language" (Corntassel and Holder, 2008: 9). Furthermore, even though it explicitly apologized for the sexual and physical abuses at residential schools, the residential school policy *itself* failed to be acknowledged or incorporated within the apologetic statement; the cultural, political, social, economic and psychological impacts of the schools remained in the shadows. On the other hand, the 2008 apology is exceedingly more robust in meeting this criterion. While replicating the 1998 acknowledgment of the sexual and physical abuses perpetrated at the schools, the 2008 apology also acknowledges aspects that failed to be noted by its predecessor. The 2008 apology explicitly acknowledges: the devastating intergenerational repercussions of the schools; the "policy of assimilation" (Canada, 2008) which fueled the creation of the schools in the first place; the intentions behind the policy; and aspects of the schools' impact beyond the actual instances of physical and sexual abuse. The following excerpts further illustrate:

Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'. Today, we recognize that this *policy of assimilation* [italics added] was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country (Canada, 2008).

Furthermore:

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that far too often these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry...the legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today (Canada, 2008).

The next two substantive points found within our framework are the acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility and a statement of regret. Again, in contrast to the 1998 Statement, the 2008 apology is measurably clearer, more robust, and less guarded and ambiguous than its predecessor. Yet it is important to note that nowhere in the apologetic statement did the Government of Canada explicitly use the strict terminology of “taking responsibility” in regard to their involvement in residential schools; the statement rather notes seven times that the Government “recognizes” their involvement in the school’s intergenerational and deleterious effects. A generous reading of the apology would concede that the Government of Canada does in fact take responsibility for the schools, even though it never does so explicitly. The following passage comes closest to satisfying the third criterion:

Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong ... the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes, and we apologize for having done this. (Canada, 2008)

Furthermore, regarding a statement of regret, the only time the word as such was employed was to express regret that many former students were not alive at the time of

the reading to receive a full apology from the Government of Canada. This statement cannot satisfactorily meet the fourth criterion of expressing regret for the residential school policies *themselves*, though a more detailed reading of the apology may indeed reveal a more implicit statement of regret. As noted previously, the 1998 Statement failed to acknowledge the devastating intergenerational and ongoing effects that can be traced back to the schools. The 2008 apology, in its comparatively more robust pronouncements and coverage of the contemporary ramifications of residential schools, could be seen to denote a sense of regret, that the historical policies have indeed led to sociopolitical ramifications that are both acknowledged and indeed regrettable. By acknowledging the intergenerational links between residential school policies and contemporary social pathologies, again, a generous read of the apology sees the fourth criterion being satisfied. Such satisfaction of this criterion could not be said to have taken place if, conversely, the 2008 apology remained silent regarding the ongoing effects of the residential schools.

The fifth and sixth criteria of our framework are, respectively, the promise of non-repetition and the component that states that the apology must not demand forgiveness. The 2008 apology passes the former while the latter's judgment is contingent on other factors. In regard to expressing a promise of non-repetition, the apology again does not explicitly use the words as such, but it is clear that a promise of non-repetition was a part of the apologetic statement: "today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country...There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever again prevail" (Canada, 2008). The fifth criterion is satisfied for the purposes of this forum, but

an important caveat must be noted: even though the apology's recognition that the past assimilationist policies of the schools were wrong and will not be repeated, this conclusion should not be seen to undermine arguments that convincingly show the contemporary presence of more coded forms of assimilationist policies. These are still taking place within settler regimes largely through discourses of modernity. This point will be further discussed later in the paper.

Regarding the criterion that an apology must refrain from demanding forgiveness, the 2008 apology reads: "the Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly" (Canada, 2008). As Susan Alter (1999) and Martha Minow (1998) argue, there is a distinct difference between *asking* for forgiveness and *demanding* it. They argue that by acknowledging the harms done and then asking forgiveness, the wrongdoer "assumes a position of vulnerability and places the injured person in control of the transaction...that person's dignity is restored" (Alter, 1999: 9; also see Minow, 1998). The injured person ends up in a position of strength. Conversely, demanding forgiveness reverses the power relationship back in favour of the perpetrator: "forgiveness is a power held by the victimized, not a right to be claimed. To expect survivors to forgive is to heap yet another burden on them" (1999: 9; 1998). How, then, should this component be judged seeing that the Government of Canada did in fact ask for forgiveness? Before any judgment is made, the component of ceremony needs to be taken into account, most notably the *speaking back* nature of the occasion.

Ceremony

As indicated earlier in this chapter, Canada's 2008 apology to the survivors of Indian residential schools was notable not just for the content of the apology pronouncement, but arguably even more for its setting. Authentic or genuine apologies are not just mere utterances, pronouncements or speech acts. They are, rather, occasions steeped with ceremonial and symbolic significance. As noted by Gibney and Roxstrom, an apology needs to be a solemn occasion accompanied by special ceremonies befitting such an event (2001: 928). This is why our eighth and last criterion, that the apology "undertakes – through measures of publicity, ceremony and concrete reparation – to both morally engage those in whose name apology is made and to assure the wronged group that the apology is sincere" (James, 2008: 4), is so paramount to an apology's perceived success. In regards to concrete financial reparations, a part of the 2006 IRSSA was the provision for financial compensation to victims through the Common Experience Payments package along with other payment formulas. Even though the presence of financial reparations may in part fulfill our final criterion for the purpose of this chapter, this is not to dismiss the vast array of debate and diversity of opinion regarding the reconciliatory significance or quality of the payments.

In an effort to appreciate the 2008 ceremonial components, let us again return to the 1998 "Statement of Reconciliation". If an occasion of apology is meant to convey an aura of significance and importance, the 1998 Statement unequivocally failed in providing such ceremonial conditions. The Statement was read during a lunchtime ceremony in a parliamentary side room, not the House of Commons where the genocidal policies of residential schools were written by policy makers, read aloud, and then

approved by elected officials representing Canadian citizens. Furthermore, although then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was in Ottawa the day of the 1998 apology, he did not attend the ceremony; even before a single apologetic word was offered by then Minister Stewart, the ceremony (and thus the apology) were already irreparably sullied. Furthermore, as is argued by Matt James in his piece “Redress Politics and Canadian Citizenship”, the 1998 Statement seemed to be “intended more to assuage the guilt of non-aboriginal Canadians rather than to signal genuine repudiation of racism and colonialism” (1998: 28).

In contrast to the ceremony held in 1998, the 2008 ceremonial components were vastly more robust and have in large part both defined the apology as an occasion and have separated it from Canada’s cumulative apology record. The day began with a sunrise ceremony on an island in the Ottawa River behind Parliament Hill, where about 100 people gathered to say prayers for former residential school students who didn't live to see the historic event (CBC, 2008). To underscore the importance of the occasion, the government ordered the working business of the Hill to be cancelled in order to mark the day of apology (CBC: 2008). The day proceeded with a dramatic ceremonial inversion of the perpetrators’ original stage of oppression, where the policies of residential schools were historically enshrined into law, by opening up the House of Commons for the apology occasion. As Ruti G. Teitel states in the book *Transitional Justice*, using the same stage which had been the original site of the state’s oppression illustrates a critical “ritual of inversion,” a ritual which infuses the historical stage of oppression with a new forward looking meaning prefaced on historical significance (Teitel, 2002: 84). With its particular acts, symbols, and signs, this ritual act of inversion derives its power and

meaning from the symbolic *turning upside down* of the canonized mythological values of the House of Commons (see Bakhtin cited in Lachmann, 1988: 125).

This usurpation is what Mikhail Bakhtin argues, in his work *Rabelais and His World* (1965), transforms the cruelty of the performative stage or institution and reconfigures it “against the folk” (Bakhtin cited in Lachmann, 1988: 186) so as to transcend the institution’s cultural and social values. Said another way, according to the work of Tietel and Bakhtin, the opening up of the House of Commons to its victimized actors symbolizes an act of inversion where the institution’s official values are usurped and where there is both a possibility of a withdrawal from the present oppressive order and a possible transformation to a more forward looking order that permits the “questioning of authority and anti-hierarchism” (Bakhtin cited in Lachmann, 1988).

From our perspective, the actors who both symbolically questioned the state’s colonial authority and challenged Canada’s colonial mythological values were the individuals who encircled the Prime Minister during the apology in the House of Commons. These actors included a group of eleven former students along with the leaders of the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and representatives from national Métis and Inuit groups (CBC, 2008: A1). In addition, the House of Commons public gallery above the floor was opened to hundreds of former students, church representatives and others who watched as the Prime Minister delivered the statement.

It is important to note, though, that the defining ceremonial components of the 2008 apology did not occur without resistance from the government. According to both the Speaker of the House, Peter Milliken, and media organizations, Aboriginal leaders were

originally not expected to be granted the opportunity to respond to the apology immediately following the Prime Minister's statement; the defining ceremonial ritual of *speaking back* was not initially intended to take place (Milliken, 2009; also see O'Neill, 2008: A.5). In fact, according to media articles, Prime Minister Harper had refused the request from Liberal member Tina Keeper to allow Aboriginal leaders to "respond to the apology from the floor of the House of Commons" (O'Neill, 2008: A.5). Harper rejected the request on grounds of precedent and tradition and urged the Liberals to "simply get behind" (O'Neill, 2008: A.5) the apology and to stop "playing politics" (*ibid*) with the event (as if it was void of said "politics" prior to Keeper's request). The invited Aboriginal leaders, though, renounced such a symbolic and historically analogous silencing of their voice and insisted on replying immediately after the apology so that their responses would be recorded not just by the media or other forums, but by the official and permanent parliamentary record. After the subsequent pressure from opposition members and the Aboriginal leaders themselves, the government eventually reneged and provided an opportunity for the invited guests to *speak back*.

The official responses by the Aboriginal representatives largely define the 2008 apology occasion. Never before in Canadian history had victims of government policy been able to give such an unrestrained address to the House of Commons; the victims' voices, alongside the victimizers', formed a part of the permanent parliamentary record. The act of *speaking back* insisted upon by Aboriginal leaders positioned the government in an uncharacteristically vulnerable position. Returning back to the sixth criterion of demanding forgiveness, and the arguments forwarded by Alter (1999: 9) and Minow (1998), in a true apology the wrongdoer, by assuming a position of vulnerability, places

the injured person in control of the transaction. After much struggle the Government of Canada on live national television, over the radio, blogged on the internet, and recorded in official record, allowed their apology (and vicariously their government) to step into the unknown and stand alone without the support of a guaranteed statement of forgiveness or even a prior guarantee of acknowledgment by Aboriginal leaders. Through persevering against state intransigence, Aboriginal leaders claimed a symbolic struggle of dignity and a *tool of voice*; by demanding that the state assume an apologetic posture, the apology encapsulated and legitimated their struggle and strength. This facet of the apology will be more robustly and critically explored in the next chapter, but for now it should be understood that by pushing the government into such a position, the injured party “ends up in a position of strength...[their] dignity is restored” (Alter, 1999: 9; Minow, 1998)

Reflections

The 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors was properly recorded in the official record, was fulsome in its naming and recognition of the relevant wrongs, expressed satisfying levels of regret and non-repetition, asked forgiveness but didn't demand it, provided reparations, and observed considerations regarding ceremony and publicity. When juxtaposed against Canada's “robust quasi-apology” (James, 2008: 9) of 1998, and when set against Canada's record of official apology, Canada's 2008 apology can be deemed to be a robust and full apology. Given that this apology is reasonably robust and has satisfied the distilled criteria, it is plausible to expect ongoing responsibilities of reconciliation for the historical wrong. Conversely, if Canada had

refused to apologize for the historical injustice it would have been reasonable to expect that contemporary reconciliation responsibilities were not a priority for the government. But, as Matt James cautiously warns observers who may be enamored by the considerable symbolic force and novelty of official state apologies, such reverence and applause “may lead observers to overestimate the scope and extent of political apologies” (2008: 16). This warning resonates loudly for this discussion; the 2008 apology, outside of its robust authenticity and ceremonial novelty, is not only a mere state pronouncement but rather an active conveyer of a political project. Corntassel and Holder explicitly allude to this, noting that apologies are entangled within a larger project of “the politics of distraction” (2008).

Corntassel and Holder argue that the process of apology and reparations has failed to transform relations between Indigenous communities and the state because the latter has remained mute on the most critical discussion for Indigenous reconciliation: the return of homeland and sovereignty over natural resources. They argue that an apology, even when combined with genuine reconciliation, cannot acknowledge Indigenous peoples’ inherent powers of self-determination because of the state’s refusal to go beyond “ideals of national unity and modernization” (2008). Wendy Brown, a poststructuralist identity critic, also alerts us to this constellation of dangers; she suggests that by asking the state to play a central role in resolution, reparation movements risk both “reinforcing and disguising state domination” (Balfour, 2005: 796). Not only does the state’s central role in apologies open the door for further state entrenchment, but it also fosters a problematic politics within the wronged community itself.

When weighed against Canada’s 2008 apology, these concerns hold much water.

When viewed from a critical or Indigenous self-determination perspective, Canada's 2008 apology appears to fit comfortably within the framework of a *politics of distraction* that reifies the identity producing sovereignty of the state. The apology repeatedly underscores the supremacy and sovereignty of the Canadian state, which is clearly seen in the following excerpts:

There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever again prevail ... we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country [and] that far too often these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you (Canada, 2008).

The Government of Canada's apology for "failing" to protect Aboriginal children completely overlooks the reality that according to many observers, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, the state *itself* was and still is the oppressor; the state's position is not that of a protector or healer, but a dominator and oppressor. Parsing out the critical perspectives of Brown, Chrisjohn et al., Corntassel and Holder among others, will be the primary task of the following chapter.

In conclusion, the previously stated goal of this chapter was to employ a more nuanced analysis of the 2008 apology itself in hopes of revealing some of its definitive qualities and political robustness. More specifically, this chapter intended to explore the definitive ceremonial aspects of the 2008 apology, which in large part distinguishes it from Canada's record of official apologies. Through the distilled criteria of apologetic authenticity, both of these intended goals have been largely satisfied. Canada's 2008 apology can be deemed to be a robust and full apology. This positive judgment has been in large part due to both the substantial resources allocated to the apology's issuance and the considerable thought dedicated to the apology's ceremonial components; through the

act of *speaking back* it enabled a distinctive “ritual of inversion” (Teitel, 2002). While this chapter recognizes the apology’s fulsome qualities, the concerns noted by apology’s critics signal the need to temper both applause and lofty expectations for further government led reconciliation projects.

We thus end our discussion in an uncomfortable and precarious position. This discussion has largely explored the apology through parsing out its *locutionary act*, the performance and initial surface meaning of an utterance or event (for more see Austin, 1962). Even though we have laid out the apology in its entirety in order to gauge its technical successes and failures, we have largely left both the apology’s *illocutionary act* and *perlocutionary effects* unexplored. The following chapter intends to fill this gap. By taking into careful consideration the apology’s interpreted commitments, obligations, and unintended effects we will be able to reveal a great deal more about its political significance and role in future-oriented discussions. Such an exploration will enable our analysis to not only capture the dominant discourses which have *framed* both the apology and its sociopolitical significance, but it will also enable us to identify the apology’s insubjective site of struggle by studying both the grievances forwarded by the apology’s critics and the progressive components hailed by the apology’s proponents. Even though apologies may seem like a bound set of micro-level events, they in fact offer a look-out point to observe some of today’s most important conversations. They are doors that lead us to society and politics; and in politics, doors never close. By their nature apologies have the *capacity* to provide a range of unintended effects; they provide a *potential opportunity* - an open frontier - for creative political re-action and interaction. The unintended and uncontrollable *perlocutionary effects*, along with the commitments and

obligations which have framed the apology's utterance, form a terrain of political struggle and are our next site of attention and interrogation.

Chapter 3

Introduction

In summary, the previous chapter explored the technical truths of the 2008 apology to former students of Canada's Indian residential schools. The chapter laid out the apology in its entirety to gauge both its technical successes and failures and to explore what was said and whether it was successful in achieving the outlined criteria for apologetic authenticity for a delegated political apology. The chapter's analysis concluded in the affirmative, that yes indeed the apology achieved a high level of robustness and apologetic authenticity especially when compared to 1998's "Statement of Reconciliation." Furthermore, the chapter succeeded in establishing what the apology actually *said* (a task that required completion before we could logically move on to explore what the apology has *done*). Following in the spirit of John L. Austin's book *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), where he argues that when we *say* something we also *do* something, the following chapter will move beyond the mere performance or surface meaning of the apology and explore what the apology has *done*. Said another way, chapter three intends to theoretically link the technical realities of the apology to the produced accumulative *meaning* of the apology. By employing the theoretical traditions of such notables as John L. Austin, Erving Goffman, Roland Chrisjohn et al., and Wendy Brown among others, this chapter will not only question the seemingly progressive narratives of the apologetic statement but also reveal what forms of domination they belie.

Exploring the apology's political significance, though, is a more complex and nuanced task than initial glances may seemingly denote. Political apologies of course

cannot act by themselves. Other actors such as governmental organizations, media corporations, and advocacy groups are responsible for an apology's genesis, pick-up, and utilization. Thus in order to satisfactorily explore the political significance of the 2008 apology we will employ a content media analysis specifically designed to capture both the apology's sociopolitical framings and dominant interpretations. To better locate and parse out the apology's framing strategies, the following analysis will be categorized into three substantive sections each dedicated to a set of interrelated but distinct framing considerations.

The first section will explore the question of how the apology was *received* in the evaluative sense; how did media commentators and organizations receive the apology upon its issuance? Admittedly, with a degree of theoretical and qualitative overlap, the second consideration will ask how the apology was *understood*; for what specific incursions or violations did the apology actually say "sorry"? Our final consideration is concerned with how the apology has been invoked in future oriented discussions; how has the apology been *used*? The purpose of exploring these framing considerations is not only to reveal how the apology has been framed by both media organizations and social actors, but more importantly it enables our analysis to query the apology's framing strategies themselves. Any final judgments regarding the apology's political significance are completely dependent on capturing and understanding both how the apology was framed and interpreted. Simply put, if we are to judge the 2008 apology, we must pull back its mystifying aura and vigorously investigate both its sociopolitical meaning and significance.

Methodology

The previous chapter studied the 2008 apology itself. We now move our conversation forward to explore how the apology was interpreted and framed by media commentators, state actors, and Indigenous activists. To accomplish this goal we will employ a media content analysis of Canada's mainstream newspapers to identify and capture the message(s) that *got across* to Canadians. Our research strategy is specifically designed to be a nuanced content survey, sensitive to both meaning and qualitative aspects, and attentive to both persistent interpretive themes and framings. All the accumulated articles were searched through Canadian Newsstand ProQuest⁹ whose database includes news articles, columns, editorials, and features from over 300 English Canadian newspapers, including both daily national newspapers *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* (Canadian Newsstand, 2010). The accumulated articles were published between 11 July 2008 (the day of the official apology) and 24 April 2010 inclusive (the day that the articles were searched for and accumulated). Search parameters resulted in 360 articles, all of which contain the terms "apology/apologized", "residential school(s)" and "Canada/Canadian".

Even though this research strategy satisfies the stated goals of this project, there are certain aspects that the strategy does not explicitly engage. As previously mentioned, this chapter is interested in the type of framing which has been employed by media organizations and political actors to explain the apology to Canada's *general public*. Seeing that the performed media content analysis restricts its search parameters to

⁹ For more information on Canadian Newsstand ProQuest, see: http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/canadian_newsstand.shtml

mainstream English Canadian newspapers, thus ignoring Aboriginal focused publications, our methodology will not directly capture either the diverse and multifaceted conversations that took place ‘behind the scenes’ within governmental organizations or particular Aboriginal communities and groups, nor will it be attentive to the mobilizing impact the apology had *within* Aboriginal communities. Even though these limitations are noted, because this analysis is interested in how the apology has been both politically and strategically employed to (re)shape or transform Indigenous-settler relations (or conversely, how the apology has been employed to (re)entrench prevailing stereotypes, representations, and power relations), this research strategy still seems appropriate. In order to capture the *dominant* discourses related to our research area, a broad but nuanced media content analysis of Canada’s *mainstream* newspapers seemed to be the most efficacious path to understanding the apology’s *broad* transformative potential and dominant political significance. Similarly said, because we want to identify and capture not only the dominant message(s) that the apology *got across* to Canadians but also the dominant themes and perspectives which framed both the apology itself and its actors, our research strategy must engage media organizations that speak to and inform Canada's broad general public.

This analysis is also cognizant that media organizations are not the only actors participating in framing strategies; apology’s other principal actors, such as state officials and Indigenous organizations, also strategically participate in framing strategies to make their voices and agendas more resonant. Therefore, because our analysis does not have unfettered access to the minds of social actors, our analysis is forced to also be attentive to the framing strategies performed by social groups and state actors themselves. Simply

put, by focusing on the apology's media coverage we not only determine how the media framed both the apology and its actors, we also capture a glimpse of other social actors and their strategically framed political agendas. By noting what quotes are used and subsequently picked up within media commentary, our research strategy not only identifies what themes resonate with media organizations, but more importantly it enables us to identify the discourses that are *not* picked-up and engaged.

The concept of "frame" will be more robustly discussed in the following sections, but for now it is important to understand that Canada's corporate news media organizations do not only inform Canadians by conveying the "simple facts". They also structure narratives in a manner that "tells the reader how to think and perceive the news" (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007: 271). The assertion that media organizations do more than just present the "simple facts" is not a new or controversial assertion; studies done by Lippmann (1922), Shaw and McCombs (1972), and McLeod et al. (1974), among many others, all agree that the menu of issues open for appropriate political discussion largely falls parallel to the political issues and perspectives emphasized and represented in news media (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007: 271). Moreover, media organizations do not operate in a political vacuum. They, along with everything and everyone else, are embroiled and encumbered within prevailing social and political norms. Therefore, while our analysis remains sharply sensitive to the normative oughts and framing perspectives that resonate with media organizations, we are also interested in identifying the themes and discourses that *do not* resonate with media organizations. Canada's corporate news organizations are not just the gatekeepers of information or the conveyers of mere facts. They are also the architects of informational perspectives; by exploring how a communicator frames an

issue we can ascertain the discourses that set an agenda of attributes which influences how we think about an issue. Furthermore, by observing how sociopolitical issues are framed by media organizations, we also learn much about the sociopolitical environment in which both the issue and media organization are embroiled (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007: 272). The full strategy behind our research goals will become more apparent throughout our discussion, but for now it is critical to understand that by focusing on Canada's mainstream written media our research strategy intends to reveal much more than just a verbatim account of the 2008 apology.

Framing Considerations

The study of interpretative framing is founded in the sociological and theoretical traditions of Erving Goffman (1974), John L. Austin (1962), and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958). Their cumulative scholarship has, in part, forged a field of intellectual inquiry that is interested in *schemas of interpretation* or *frame* (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 74). Broadly speaking, these scholars are not interested in the mere utterance of language, but rather in the performative elements of language; said another way, the above scholars agree that when we *say* something we also *do* something. Following in that same spirit, *frame analysis* is a theoretical terrain interested with schemata of interpretation that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Goffman, 1974: 21; Snow et al. 1986: 464). A frame is further defined as a “general, standardized, predefined structure (in the sense that it already belongs to the receiver's knowledge of the world) which allows recognition of the world, and guides perception...allowing them to build defined expectations about

what is to happen, that is to make sense of their reality” (Donati, 1992: 141-2).

Exploring *frame* has become a pillar of interest for social and political movement scholars not just because its analysis enables individuals to, in the famous words of Goffman, figure out “what is it that’s going on here?” (1974), but because it also allows us to “capture the process of the attribution of meaning” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 74) which lies behind every interaction or event. For social movements and advocacy groups, interpretative frames pave a road of intelligibility for *social problems*, where natural forces and individual responsibility are channeled and transformed into an identifiable and more easily picked-up salient “social problem” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 74). As noted in Melissa Nobles’ book, *The Politics of Official Apologies*, there are three principal actors when it comes to official political apologies: 1) mobilized minority groups; 2) state officials; and 3) public intellectuals (2008: 14). If political minority groups want their message to be identified and understood as a *real* social problem by the other and more powerful principal actors, they must strategically frame their claims within salient discourses so that their claims can be *pulled into focus* and made intelligible.

Simply said, when social actors engage with the powerful state, they are coercively encouraged to strategically frame their political agenda within salient discourses; it is challenging for political minority groups to be positively recognized if they do not in part strategically adopt discourses that can be *seen* and *heard*. The exploration of these discourses is certainly worthy of scholarly attention because they not only reveal what discourses are deemed acceptable and salient in a particular body politic, but they also elucidate the prevailing power relations that define social and political interactions. The

question is, then, what discourses are dominant within contemporary Canadian politics when it comes to the 2008 apology, and what do those discourses reveal about the state of Indigenous-settler relations and the transformational potential of the apology?

This question will be thoroughly explored throughout this chapter, but for now it should be understood that the study of frame deals with actual “deeds, not just mere events” (Goffman, 1974: 23); thus from this point forward we must perceive the apology of 2008 as not just a mere *event* but as a *deed*. By applying a frame analysis to both the apology and the accumulated media articles it will reveal the framing process that political agents employed to get the apology *across* to Canadians. Such an analysis of frame will reveal central elements of Canadian sociopolitical culture, its principal classes of interpretation schemata, and their relation to one another (Goffman, 1974). When these findings are distilled and contextualized by the realities of contemporary Canada, and the power relations that largely define Indigenous-settler relations, the often praised political apology of 2008 will hopefully be seen in a whole new and revealing light.

Tool of Voice

We begin our conversation by first exploring how the political apology of 2008 acted as an officializing and powerful *tool of voice* for marginalized political minority groups. By overlooking or disregarding political apology’s “distinctive moral core” (Tavuchis, 1991) this conversation would perform a great disservice to the scholarly field of reparations. Even if the most pointed detractions forwarded by apology critics prove to be reasonable and persuasive, there is still room in this conversation for political apology’s more progressive offerings. Furthermore, dismissing political apology’s more

empowering and cathartic components would mean not only ignoring the litany of scholarly literature that sees a role for political apologies as both a potentially progressive and future oriented tool (such is the perspective of Elazar Barkan) but it would also mean ignoring the accumulated media articles which overwhelmingly cite apology's reparative elements (if only potentially). Therefore, even though we will be doubting the transformative potential of Canada's 2008 apology specifically, no comments made here today intend to negate, disrespect or challenge any self-declaration of personal healing or atonement; doing so would be tantamount to the further patronization of residential school survivors.

As previously mentioned, throughout history the dominant mode of thinking was that the strong did what they wished purely based on their strength, a sentiment which is reflected by Thucydides in the "Melian dialogue": "the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Gibney et al., 2007: 2). This characterization surely holds true to this very day. But even though we certainly still live in a world of extreme power disparities, the saliency of contemporary reparation politics has opened up a new yet difficult landscape for minority groups and social movements to navigate. By transforming previously inaudible voices into recognized and intelligible official discourses, reparation politics not only provides a forum of mobilizing terrain for minority groups and social movements, but it also provides an official forum for previously silenced voices to be heard and acknowledged. Simply stated, *might still largely makes right*, but the saliency of reparation politics has revealed small cracks in Thucydides' characterization.

The officializing *tool of voice* that reparation politics offers political minority

groups has also proven effective in reorienting the undeserved and demeaning past judgments that viewed the minority groups' constituencies as "unworthy or incompetent" (James, 1998: 30). Through dialogical relationships between political actors, reparation politics at their most radical provide an opportunity to transform previously oppressive interpretive frames from "purely static cognitive structures incapable of evolving" (Della Porta et al, 2006) into conceptual frames open to democratic (re)negotiation. As is emphasized by Ann Mische's piece "Cross-Talk in movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link", through reparation politics' discursive and conversational dynamics, frames not only "create new representation of experience, but also constitute new relations between social actors" (2003). Possible frame transformation directly gestures to not only apology's political power and transformative *potential* noted by scholars such as Barkan and Tavuchis, but also to the notion that political apologies are potent *tools of voice*.

Officializing symbols such as political apologies, even though encumbered with state-sanctioned narratives, have the potential to enable marginalized groups to frame their objectives in powerful and official, if only quasi-official, language. Furthermore, gesturing to Teitel's assertion that apologetic acts can represent a critical "ritual of inversion" (Teitel, 2002: 84; also see Bakhtin in Lachmann, 1988), James argues that redress settlements have the potential to replace negative symbols with honourable images of "undeserved suffering overcome by group virtue" (James, 1998: 16). Therefore, such employment of official language and symbol by political minority groups does not necessarily negate progressive transformation from taking place. In fact, the utilization of official language by marginalized groups can often be subversively and

strategically used to both embarrass and reveal the power-holder's unjustness. Even though we remain cognizant of Cornassel's and Holder's warning that problematizes the distracting elements of symbolic-focused strategies, this positive perspective sees political apologies as a potential source of power. When the language of minority groups aligns with that of dominant power holders, such as the state or media corporations, sociopolitical messages that would normally be *out-of-focus* and ignored are pulled *into-focus* and heard.

It is thus not surprising that minority groups in all their inter and intra-group diversity often pickup and employ the officializing language of reparation politics. Furthermore, apology's more strategic employment may in part answer the question as to why there have been more than 60 official apologies for historical wrongs that have been issued by governments during the last half of the twentieth century (Nobles, 2003: 3). Apology's upsurge trend within the international and domestic arenas not only points to the breadth of diversity of political minority groups, but also the depth of their exclusion, and the power of symbols. To be sure, marginalized peoples' usage of quasi-official language, like everything else, should be open to scrutiny, but it needs to be first and foremost respected. It would be a great injustice to deny peoples who have been systematically pushed to the marginalized outskirts of society, and who have been denied access to the levers of power and privilege, the opportunity to amplify their historically silenced voices through officializing language in hopes of attaining some form of meaningful reconciliation and emancipation. Therefore, from this perspective reparation politics represents a progressive and hopeful departure (even though minutely so) from Thucydides' assertion that *might makes right*. That being said, while our analysis

remains steadfastly appreciative of the above characterization, the level of reconciliation and emancipation which reparation politics has achieved is highly contextual, often disappointing, and at its worst representative of a regressive form of politics.

Framing Consideration #1: How the Apology has been *Received*

Even though reparation politics may potentially offer a new and emancipatory terrain for political actors to navigate, our primary goal in this forum is to confront the possible unintended consequences of its success, and to both push forward and appreciate a history that indicates why “ceding the struggle over the proper uses of state power to the forces of the racial status quo” (Balfour, 2005: 797) is a persistent danger for reparation politics. To help support this assertion, we move to our first framing consideration that is concerned with how the apology has been received in an evaluative sense by media commentators and organizations. On this matter it is fair to say that the 2008 apology has been largely viewed by media commentators and organizations as an outstanding, robust, and earnest declaration of apology, regret, contrition, and reconciliation. This is not to say that the apology did not have its critics; there were articles that did question the phenomenon of political apologies as a whole by questioning their validity and appropriateness as a political discourse. But those same articles, with all their dissenting criticisms, still clearly conceded that Harper's words were indeed earnest and well articulated. This positive evaluation of the apology was largely conveyed through citing the apology's emotional effects; the emotional gravitas of the apology and its defining ceremonial components became central elements of both the occasion and their subsequent representation. The apology's repeatedly cited

elicitation of “tears”, “crying” and “emotion” was the dominant framing interpretation of how the apology was *received*.

Again, even though many political actors cited weariness over the apology's political significance, the discourses found within the articles overwhelmingly cite the emotional impact and cathartic healing attributes of the apologetic statement. In fact, the apology was largely judged by both media commentators and other social actors by focusing on the event's emotional elements. This is notable; within the scholarly field of apologies, in part historically led by Nicolas Tavuchis (1991), delegated many-to-many apologies are most often judged by the subsequent political follow-through, such as the commitment for financial reparations or political transformation, and not on the apology's emotional elements. Simply said, partly because of their delegated and performative nature, discourses surrounding intrapersonal apologies usually reflect a “proof is in the pudding” attitude and are not usually judged through the narrow lens of personal authenticity or virtue. At any rate, even though many actors were dubious about the government's political commitment to change following the apology, through the lens of its emotional and often promised healing attributes, media articles overwhelmingly cited the apology as both a powerful *tool of voice* and *political symbol*.

For example, Bill Curry notes the “raw emotion bursting for an apology decades overdue, [and] there were many smiles” (2008: A.1). *The Gazette* noted that “during the speech, people watching from the public galleries in the Commons wiped away tears” (Fitzpatrick, 2008: A.1), and that “amid tears and solemn silence, burning sage and banging drums Aboriginal leaders hailed the Prime Minister's apology” (ibid). Another political commentator noted that “Wednesday's heartfelt ceremony...start[ed] a healing

process for aboriginal peoples” (Paulson, 2008: P.4), while another article titled “Harper’s apology for residential school tragedy is met with tears, hope for future” stated that “sniffing came from every corner of the room” (Spalding, A.1). Furthermore, a *Prince George* hard news article began its coverage by stating, “some cried quietly, others bowed their heads, closed their eyes or rose to applaud” (2008: P.7), while an adjacent article noted that the apology's observers were “choking back tears” (Kyle, A.1). This emotional frame acknowledges the scholarship that argues that interpretations conducive to collective action do not so much originate from “cognitive processes and strategic framing as from collective processes with a strong emotional dimension” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 87; Gamson 1990; Snow et al. 1986). By highlighting the apology's elicitation of *healing* and *emotion*, the apology's symbolism as a watershed moment in Canadian political history became its dominant discourse.

To further explore this assertion, let us examine a representative sample of how media commentators and organizations received the apology utterance *itself* immediately following its issuance. The editorial published by the *Winnipeg Free Press* compared past and present administration's handling of the residential school issue. It notes that previous federal ministers and officials had only given “lip service” to the role government played in the history of residential schools (surely a veiled criticism of the sullied 1998 “Statement of Reconciliation”), and that it was Harper who finally “delivered a historic apology” which “ushered in a welcome glimmer of hope for the country” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2008: A.14). Moving on thematically, political commentator Barbara Yaffe of the *Vancouver Sun* said that the apology “was certainly robust and sincerely delivered by Prime Minister Harper who repeated the words ‘we

apologize' or 'we're sorry' a total of eight times" (2008: A.17). Noted commentator John Ivison, published in the *Times-Colonist*, said that Harper conveyed the impression of "genuine contrition," and that the apology constituted an "unequivocal mea culpa on behalf of all Canadians" (2008: A.14). The *Globe and Mail's* Bill Curry again cited the "raw emotion" in the House of Commons, and also noted that Harper truly "expressed remorse" (2008: A.1).

The *Globe's* published editorial stated, "even in the context of the culture of contrition in which we live, [the apology] marked a historic moment for Canada" (2008: A.16). An editorial from *The Gazette* noted that the apology "was both generous and heartfelt" and a "necessary acknowledgment of the decades of suffering" (2008: A.22). The editorial from the *Calgary Herald* repeated many of the previously noted evaluations when it stated that the apology was a "historic act of contrition" and "a new dawn" for Canada (2008: A.18). Moving to the more thematically cautious and measured evaluations, the editorial from the *National Post*, which was entitled "Enough with the Apologies," stated that even though it was "uneasy" with political apologies as a whole, the particular apology in question was evaluated as being "eloquent" (2008: A.22). Even the polarizing and largely reactionary political commentator Margaret Wente noted in her piece that the apology "was necessary and overdue" (2008: A.17).

While it is easily seen that media commentators and organizations largely rated the qualitative nature of the apology as robust and fulsome, it is important to remind ourselves of an important caveat noted by Matt James in his article "Wrestling with the Past: Apologies, Quasi-Apologies, and Non-Apologies in Canada" (2008). He notes that often the "considerable symbolic force of official state pronouncements, coupled with the

historic novelty of watching a state assume an apologetic posture before people it has victimized and oppressed” (2008: 16) may cloud perspectives and leave observers in a “magical and potentially mystifying aura” (ibid). Often this aura results in overstated, verbose, and hyperbolic evaluations of an apologetic statement immediately following its issuance. Keeping this in mind, the retroactive renegotiation of the 2008 apology statement by activists and observers seems to have resulted in the apology maintaining its original positive evaluation noted at its issuance; the apology has seemingly resisted the often tarnishing effects of both time and perspective (for more see James, 2008).

To help support this assertion, on 11 July 2009 the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine, along with Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl, celebrated the one year anniversary of the apology's issuance on Parliament Hill. This “National Day of Reconciliation,” according to Fontaine, was about “forgiveness and facing the dark moments of the country’s history with the original residents of the land” (cited in Edmonton Journal, 2009: A.5). This enthusiastic and ceremonial return by two principal actors to the site of the apology’s original utterance signifies its apparent tenacity. The apology has seemingly weathered the passage of time without a noticeable retroactive downgrading. Such acts of annual celebration and commemoration cannot be said about Canada’s defunct 1998 “Statement of Reconciliation.” Again, keeping in mind James’ caveat, the evaluations and ceremonial significance of the 2008 apology have seemingly maintained their luster.

In conclusion, the apology as a whole was viewed by media commentators and organizations as an outstanding, robust, and earnest declaration of apology, regret, contrition and reconciliation. This judgement is largely determined through the

highlighting of apology's more emotion-based attributes, such as its repeatedly cited elicitation of "tears" and "crying." While the above evaluation largely satisfies our initial framing consideration, we are left wondering about the political significance of the emotion-based framing especially when it comes to delegated and performative many-to-many apologies (Tavuchis, 1991). Even though this apparent emphasis on the apology's emotional components is not surprising, seeing that emotion plays a central role in reparation politics, we are left uncomfortable by what this emotion-based discourse is obscuring politically; simply said, by repeatedly looking at an individual's emotion or psychological state, what are we *not* looking at?

Framing Consideration #2: How the Apology has been *Understood*

By repeatedly looking at an *individual's* psychological state and *emotion*, what other discourses and political significance are media organizations *not* looking at, and why? In hopes of revealing some answers to these questions, we will look at how the apology has been framed to be *understood*. This question encompasses a constellation of interrelated questions that include: what has the apology been viewed to be about; and what has the apology been viewed to be apologizing for? Exploring answers to these questions relies heavily on analyzing frame interpretation. As previously noted, when it comes to identifying and recognizing a "social problem," mobilized minority groups rely on frame adoption to transform natural causes or personal responsibility into a collective discourse more intelligible to group members and power holders (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Therefore, the adopted frame for Indian residential school survivors needed not just to identify them as collective actors or a social group, but rather it needed to link the

“individual sphere with that of collective experience,” while at the same time demonstrating the “relevance of a given problem to individual life experience” (Della Porta et al, 2006: 79).

At initial glance the process of framing may seem to be a rather expedient and efficacious way of getting one’s message across to power holders; and it is. But the process of framing “social problems” does not take place within a political vacuum; dominant representations of order and of social patterns, which reflect central elements of a society’s culture and principal classes of interpretation schemata (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 79), restrict both the placement and mobility of a frame’s borders. Dominant frames that are resistant to transformation or alteration are what social movement scholars often call “master frames”: entrenched frames which do not develop in isolation but tend to be “concentrated in particular political and historical periods” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 79; Tilly, 1975) and are thus both highly utilized and resistant to modification. The significant historical and political processes which have framed Indigenous peoples for the Canadian state, including Indigenous-settler relations in general, has been the historical and contemporary sociopolitical significance of colonial oppression and domination. Therefore, when we speak of the apologetic framing of the Indian residential schools and its victims our frame analysis must be placed in relation to the colonial representations and stereotypes which have defined Canadian social and political culture, systems of understanding, and Indigenous-settler relations.

Even though we take heed of John L. Austin’s argument that the *perlocutionary effects* of language or an event, being the effects the statement has on an external audience, provide a near endless realm of interpretation and representation, from our

perspective the sociopolitical realities of the Canadian political milieu restrict such limitless interpretations through the persistence and political saliency of *master frames*. Taking account of *master frames* is thus useful for our discussion because it not only reveals what the apology has in part been *understood* to be for, but it also has the potential to broaden our investigative terrain to reveal both structures of domination and apparatuses of oppression. The following will therefore argue that the employment of certain colonial *master frames* have made the 2008 apology intelligible to hegemonic representations and understandings of Indigenous peoples held by the Canadian colonial state; its framing enabled the apology's actors and audiences to "locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences" (Goffman, 1974: 21) so that they could make sense of it all, to figure out "what is it that's going on here?" (ibid) .

What, then, was the *master frame* that made the 2008 apology intelligible to its political actors and audiences, and how did it make the apology comprehensible? As noted in the previous chapter the apology's *locutionary act*, which is a category of John L. Austin that refers to the performance and surface meaning of a statement, succeeded in conveying a robust acknowledgment of the schools' perceived violations. In fact, the most important distinction between the 1998 "Statement of Reconciliation" and the 2008 apology was that the latter conveyed an explicit renunciation of assimilationist policies by both directly linking the schools to forced assimilationist policies and by acknowledging that both the government and the policies were wrong. The 1998 Statement, on the other hand, failed to apologize for the actual policy of assimilation and thus left the schools as regrettable but acute sites of abuse.

The three interrelated violations or injustices acknowledged by the 2008 apology

include: the schools' policy of forced assimilation (most poignantly acknowledged in Harper's admission that the schools intended "to kill the Indian in the child"); the schools' responsibility for being the site of rampant child abuse; and the schools' role in forcibly stamping out Aboriginal culture. The acknowledgment of said abuses accumulatively represent the apology's dominant *locutionary act* (referring to the surface meaning of the statement). The surveyed media articles support this assertion by confirming that the aforementioned abuses were in fact the message that *got across* to the general public. Said another way, through mainstream media sources the Canadian general public, which encompasses both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, came to understand the apology to be "sorry for" forced assimilation, child abuse, and loss of culture.

The Prime Minister's statement that "we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong" (Canada, 2008), and that the schools intended to "kill the Indian in the child" (ibid) were prominent and heavily utilized quotes throughout the articles. Political leaders such as Stephane Dion stated that the "tragedy of forced assimilation of aboriginal peoples in Canada [should] never happen again" (cited in Canada, 2008). Jack Layton was repeatedly cited for noting that the apology provided recognition that "the schools' assimilation program affected aboriginal people in a very significant and negative way" (cited in The Gazette, 2008: A.4). A letter to the editor in the *Toronto Star* not only noted the apology's acknowledgment of forced assimilation but also the healing properties of such an official acknowledgment: "apologizing for the government's forced assimilation policies in residential schools will finally allow closure of a reprehensible chapter in Canadian history" (2008: pAA).

Furthermore, the schools' role in stamping out forms of Aboriginal culture and their responsibility for creating an exploitative and abusive environment for children were also repeatedly noted as reasons *why* the apology was issued. For example, a hard news article notes that the policies "wrenched aboriginal children from their parents and forced them to live in schools where their language and culture were banned and where many were abused physically and sexually" (Star-Phoenix, 2008: A.1). In fact, a *Times-Colonist* hard news article stated that the apology was for "the abuses inflicted upon aboriginal students" (2008: A.14)), and that the schools forced children to "give up their languages and their native traditions" (ibid), in the hopes that the "young aboriginal children would be better off ... assimilated into white society" (ibid). Premier Gordon Campbell said that the children "lost their culture" (cited in Vancouver Sun, 2008: A.4), while Stephen Harper was repeatedly quoted as saying "we now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions" (ibid). It is clear that the acts of forced assimilation and abuse, which in part resulted in a loss of culture, were what the apology was understood to be "sorry for."

The above is the understood *locutionary act* of the 2008 apology. Yet what is even more revealing is what the dominant reading of the apology's *illocutionary act*, another category of John L. Austin which refers to the utterance's conveyance of a right, commitment, or obligation, reveals about the apology's understanding. The media's understanding of the apology was more than just an uncontextualized and frameless acknowledgment of said abuses (the *locutionary act*). The apology was also understood to signal an obligation and a commitment (the *illocutionary act*), which in this case was for "renewal" and "healing." The most cited example of this is seen in Phil Fontaine's

repeatedly cited quote, that the apology signaled “a new dawn.” Furthermore, Marguerite Wabano, the Swampy Cree woman who was part of the delegation that encircled the Prime Minister on the floor of the House of Commons, was repeatedly cited as stating “I’m very impressed with everything. It brings me hope and comfort” (cited in Smith, 2008: A.17). Political leaders heavily employed the healing and repair discourse in their comments; Stephane Dion noted that the apology “is a monument dedicated to truth, reconciliation and healing” (cited in Winnipeg Free Press, 2008: A.15), while Jack Layton declared that the apology is the critical juncture for healing, stating that “it must be the beginning” (ibid). To further support this assertion, at a National Aboriginal Day celebration, Chief Lawrence Joseph of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) stated that it was a “very historic and long-awaited apology to those of us who are survivors of the residential schools of Canada... I've always said, where denial ends, healing begins” (cited in Gillis, 2008: A.3). Furthermore, Green Party Leader Elizabeth May was repeatedly quoted saying that the apology “provides an opportunity to begin the act of healing” (cited in The Gazette, 2008, A.4).

Because the apology’s dominant *illocutionary act* conveyed a commitment to some form of psychological “healing” or “renewal,” the subjects of the apology, being the school’s victims and Indigenous people as a whole, were subsequently and overwhelmingly portrayed by both media organizations and Indigenous leaders as somehow deficient, “broken,” “sick,” or “wounded” due to their attendance or close genealogical proximity to the schools. Furthermore, the apology itself was situated to be the critical juncture for victim’s “healing”; repeatedly it was cited in the articles that, for example, “the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and

reconciliation” (The Vancouver Sun, 2008: B.3). Gilles Duceppe’s comments also support this by saying that even though apologies begin the journey, “it is impossible to ease these scars, repair these broken souls” (cited in Winnipeg Free Press, 2008: A.15). Many hard news stories also framed Aboriginal peoples as “broken” or “sick” by quoting an Aboriginal leader who said “Canada took a historic step Wednesday to heal a deep wound that’s been allowed to fester for too long” (Star-Phoenix, 2008: A.10). Another dominant phrase employed by the articles was that “for many survivors of Indian residential schools, the apology represented a significant moment in healing past wounds” (Whitehorse Star, 2009: p11). Furthermore, even though the apology was well received, it was often cited that schools represent “a wound that will take generations to heal”, and that “some wounds are harder to fix than others” (Alberni Valley Times, 2009: A.5).

Another example of both this “wounded” victim frame and the apology’s healing powers is seen when AFN Chief Phil Fontaine eloquently and poetically stated immediately following the apology that “the memories of residential schools sometimes cut like merciless knives at our souls...this day will help us to put that pain behind us” (Vancouver Sun, 2008: A.4; also see Canada, 2008). Furthermore, the articles routinely highlighted how in an attempt to cope with the wounding horrors of the schools, the broken students were led to abuse both alcohol and other illicit drugs. In fact, the state sponsored apology was portrayed to be a positive turning point in the survivors’ addiction to drugs; in other words, it took state action to heal the wounds that were inflicted upon the students at the schools. For example, a health director is cited as saying that the apology signals “the end of one era and the beginning of the healing and moving forward

for our people that are very stricken with alcohol and drugs and various things as a result of that, the residential school legacy” (MacLennan, 2008: p4). Another article stated that the abuse at the schools “meant a lifetime of shame for many former students...some took their own lives; others found comfort in alcohol or drugs” (O’Neill, 2008: A.5).

Furthermore, the effects of “residential schools can be seen in the hundreds of aboriginals battling drug and alcohol addictions” (Komarnicki, 2008: A.8). One story cites a man who “thought it was a way of life, both my parents were alcoholics” (Komarnicki, 2008: A.8) and that “it took years of drinking to come to grips with [a brother’s] death” (ibid).

To be certain, a commitment to “healing” and “renewal” is a most warranted and wanted mandate for the apology. As Roland Chrisjohn et al. notes in his book, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* (1997), “why would anyone profess difficulty believing that some peoples suffered personal problems as a result of treatment at Residential Schools” (Chrisjohn et al., 2006: 96) and would thus require some form of healing or personal reconciliation? The apparent obviousness of the schools’ *victimizing* and *wounding* nature is repeatedly seen throughout the media articles and also gestures back to our initial framing consideration where we determined that the apology was positively received largely through citing not only its cathartic and emotional components for individual victims but also the schools’ toxic intergenerational effects. The articles in fact overflowed with emotional personal accounts of survivors and their family members, citing the apology as a sombre event that provided them with an opportunity to *heal* and move on with their lives.

The political and social significance of the “wounded identity” (see Brown 1995;

Balfour, 2005) frame employed by both media and Indigenous organizations will become more apparent in the following section. But for now it is important to understand that through the conveyance of both the apology's dominant *locutionary* and *illocutionary act* media organizations and Indigenous advocacy groups both positioned and framed the 2008 apology as the critical juncture of *healing* for the *individual, emotional, and wounded* Indigenous body and mind. The widely employed *master frame* constructed the state as the *healer* of deficient and pathological Aboriginal peoples.

Framing Consideration #3: How has the Apology been Used

It has been argued that the apology's framing process resulted in it being perceived to be the critical juncture for "healing" and "repair" for the "broken" and "sick" survivors of residential schools. What ramifications does this pose for the apology's sociopolitical significance? This question must be taken seriously. Even though reparation movements are often fueled by emotion, they are certainly interested in more than just the personal needs and psychological status of victims; our analysis must therefore dig deeper to reveal what forms of domination these discourses belie. Again, it is without doubt that "healing" and personal reconciliation are warranted and legitimate; no arguments made in this forum should be interpreted otherwise. Yet the apology's argued *illocutionary act*, being the commitment for healing and renewal through state sponsored policies, needs to be more closely examined and contextualized by the prevailing and deeply entrenched *master frames* that largely define Canada's Indigenous-settler relations. If we at all want to know either how the apology has been *used* in future oriented discussions or its transformational potential in contemporary politics, we must further explore how the

apology and its actors have been framed in relation to each other and the dominant representations of order and of social patterns that define central sociopolitical elements in Canada.

In their book, which was written well before the advent of the 2008 apology to residential school survivors, Chrisjohn et al. explore how the framing of Indian residential schools aligns with the prevailing colonial discourses of the Canadian state; their conclusions implicitly gesture to Goffman's *master frame* analysis. Chrisjohn et al. argue that the framing used to describe residential schools' victims has for decades framed them as being "wounded" and "broken" peoples (1997: 98). Furthermore, in order for the survivors to participate in a process of "healing" or "repair," the employed *master frame* requires them to demonstrate and accept "their pathology, and to parade it before the Powers That Be, before those Powers will condescend to undertake the merest of amends; and in doing this, Aboriginal peoples must also accept the warped, pathological history that Powers would have in the place of truth" (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 98). This *master frame* is what Chrisjohn et al. and others have come to call the "Residential School Syndrome (RSS)" frame (1997: 99); it portrays all residential school students as exhibiting a uniform and regular cluster of symptoms analogous to a mental disorder or disease. At the same time that the RSS frame portrays residential school survivors as individuals who are "sick," "broken," and who are in need of "healing," it actively obscures and disguises the schools' "genocidal nature...immorality of forced religious indoctrination...arrogance [and] paternalism" by reducing the state sanctioned schools to mere micro-level institutions (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 100).

To further explain, because the RSS frame represents "residential schools as a

problem of specific individuals”, Chrisjohn et al. argue that it effectively leaves state dominance and apparatuses of oppression unscrutinized. The schools are effectively left unencumbered with macro-level processes. They remain as unfortunate and regrettable (but good intentioned) institutions. Furthermore, even though the 2008 apology rightfully conveyed an explicit renunciation of assimilation, it completely *failed* at acknowledging the schools’ *political* role in *colonization*. Said another way, while at the same time focusing on the lamentable loss of culture and language, the practice of child abuse, and the wrong headedness of forced assimilation, the 2008 apology ignored the schools’ role in the *political* process of Europeans conquering the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. For example, in a repeatedly published article, the apology was framed to “say sorry” for the schools’ “cultural impact...and [for] the many native languages [which] were completely or nearly extinguished during the period of the schools’ operation” (The Vancouver Sun, 2008: B.3). Even though the siege on Indigenous cultures and languages is intertwined with colonial oppression and is of course grossly unjust, the macro-level political processes of land/resource usurpation, European imperialism, colonization, and racial domination failed to be picked up by media commentary or hard news stories.

Critical perspectives regarding the apology, and how it failed to acknowledge the schools’ role in broader processes, were virtually absent from the apology’s coverage. In fact, the few articles that did manage to traverse this barrier only appeared in off-hand *opinion* pieces, short letters to the editor, or in quotes by Indigenous leaders which were left unengaged by the article’s actual commentary. Said another way, instead of placing the assertion that the schools were part of a greater racialized process of land usurpation

and colonization in a position of respect, influence, or legitimation (*within* hard news stories or *engaged* by political commentary), they were instead cast off to the opinion page, a forum where opinions are many and easily dismissed. Discourses of Indigenous self-determination, and other critical perspectives on the political origins of Canada, fail to align with the heavily employed RSS frame and were thus largely ignored in the apology's coverage. This observation will be more fully parsed out in the following chapter, but simply put, even though there were voices attempting to push through the powerful framing filters, the schools' role in European imperialism, land usurpation, and racialized colonization was put on the narrative side line -- shadowed by the apology's mystifying aura. *Canada* was left unproblematized.

The accumulated media articles support these assertions and characterizations. Admittedly it is difficult to show missing discourses. By their nature they are not present; in fact, out of the entire corpus of news articles, only 14 even had the word "colonization" at all present within the article. The absence of these discourses from both political commentary and hard news stories speaks volumes and directly gestures to the concerns of Corntassel and Holder, that political apologies in a colonial context symbolize a "politics of distraction." Moreover, on top of the dominant *locutionary* and *illocutionary acts* previously noted, both the tenor and content of the employed discourses of prominent political commentators reflect what Chrisjohn et al. call the "standard account" (1997:19) of residential schools. The "standard account" is the dominant and heavily utilized representation of residential schools that excuses genocide, justifies child abuse, implicitly (and often explicitly) praises or endorses colonial oppression, and disposes all problems related to the schools (1997:19). For example,

Tom Oleson, a leading media commentator for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, crystallizes Chrisjohn et al.'s concerns when he bullishly and fervently argues that the “government entered the residential schools program with good intentions, first to provide education and health care that native children would not have received otherwise, and then to promote their assimilation into Canadian society” (2009: A.18). Moreover, Margaret Wente states in her article that she regrets that the schools have made “assimilation a dirty word” (Wente, 2008: A.17).

According to Chrisjohn et al., the RSS frame also excuses and justifies the schools' systematic and genocidal attack on Indigenous peoples and epistemes by encouraging individuals to cite Indigenous peoples who claim a positive experience at the schools. Wente did exactly this in her article where she cites an Indigenous woman who “recalls her experience [at the schools] with gratitude” (Wente, 2008: A.17). Chrisjohn et al. compares such claims to people testifying at a murder trial saying that the accused is innocent because the accused didn't murder them (1997: 97). Furthermore, the written apology itself gestures to the “standard account” in its brief attempt to justify the schools' existence by placing them under the moral guise of *education*: “in the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligations to educate aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools” (Canada, 2008). Chrisjohn et al. argue that these “standard account” narratives are not a reconciliatory act of contrition, but are rather “another crime” (1997: 22).

Political scientist Wendy Brown also has concerns regarding the utilization of state endorsed representations and understandings, most notably articulated in her book, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995). Unlike reparation critics on the

political right, who largely push dehistoricizing and race-blind discourse in their condemnation of reparation politics, Brown's critique of reparation and identity politics allies itself with a critique of structures of injustice (Balfour, 2005). As such, Brown points to the same constellation of concerns as both Chrisjohn et al. and Cornstassel and Holder, noting that in asking the state to play such a central role in resolution or healing, reparation movements risk both reifying and disguising state dominance while at the same time legitimizing and normalizing the colonial states' white-masculine "point-of-viewlessness" (Brown, 1995: 197). Brown pushes her argument forward by positing that "the state...does not simply handle clients or employ staff, but produces state subjects, as bureaucratized, dependent, disciplined, and gendered" (1995: 195).

Together, the critiques of both Brown and Chrisjohn et al. partly reveal that through the RSS frame the Canadian state has employed "damage imagery" (Balfour, 2005: 795) in its representation of residential school survivors, constructing a pathological and docile colonial subject that is *smashed, broken* and in need of state *healing*. Of course the toxic intergenerational effects of residential schools, which stem from students being subjected to severe and prolonged oppression and exploitation, are categorically not being questioned. As previously noted, "why would anyone profess difficulty believing that some peoples suffered personal problems as a result of treatment as Residential School?" (Chrisjohn et al., 2006: 96). But if Brown's and Chrisjohn et al.'s analysis are followed through, the RSS frame secures the colonial state's position of dominance by coercively encouraging residential school survivors and Indigenous advocates to align their discourses with the state endorsed frame in order to receive what Chrisjohn et al. call, "the merest of amends" (1997: 98). Said another way, in an attempt to make "whole

what has been smashed” (Torpey, 2006), the employed RSS frame secures prevailing ideologies of dominance by ensuring the success of liberal policies aimed at improving the conditions of the colonized by “reaffirming white, middle-class racial assumptions and eliciting pity” (Balfour, 2005: 796).

Furthermore, it is the RSS frame’s credibility and saliency within contemporary Canadian politics that has made it a successful and often utilized frame. In fact, according to Chrisjohn et al., it has been the dominantly employed frame for decades; even since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1994, “little of substance has changed” (1997: 11). It has been a frame that makes residential schools intelligible to the dominating state and to the general public by devolving the *total institutions* into personal and episodic accounts of micro-level abuses resulting in a predictable and universal set of pathological illnesses and disorders. As is argued by social movement scholarship, the RSS frame is coherent and salient not just because it “touches upon meaningful and important aspects of people’s lives” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 79) but more importantly it aligns with the “broader cultural structure in which a movement develops” (ibid). It has been argued throughout this thesis that the most dominant “cultural structures” that have informed the Indigenous-settler relationship in Canada have been the oppressive and dominating structures of colonialism. Gesturing to these concerns regarding frame alignment in the colonial context, Glen Coulthard, in his analysis of Fanonian literature, argues that the long-term stability and maintenance of a colonial system of governance relies as much on the “internalization of the forms of racist recognition imposed or bestowed on the Indigenous population by the colonial state and society as it does on brute force” (Coulthard, 2009:

539).

To put it more succinctly, in an attempt to receive “the merest of amends” (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 98) the residential school apology saw a process of “frame alignment” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 82) which saw media organizations, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political actors strategically employ the RSS frame in a manner which would bridge the gulf of unintelligibility between political minority groups and “the Powers That Be” (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 98). This strategic employment of the RSS frame by Aboriginal organizations and leaders should not be surprising or harshly condemned. So as not to limit the full range of options available to them, political minority groups or movement organizers incorporate interpretations of reality produced by outside sources so that their claims can be better *understood* by those same (and usually more powerful) foreign sources. In an attempt to achieve the best results for their nations and communities, many Indigenous organizations, while at the same time pushing back and challenging prevailing discourses (which were subsequently marginalized if not outright ignored by media organizations) adopted aspects of the RSS frame so that the apologetic agenda could move forward in hopes of bringing some form of amends and reconciliation to their sociopolitically marginalized constituents. The apology enabled a major form of frame alignment that broadly relies on a “dynamic relationship between the development of a movement and the cultural heritage of both the country in which it operates and its institutions” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 79). And when the sociopolitical realities of an oppressive and dominating relationship are at play, as is the case in Canada, it is not surprising that the dominant pathologizing frames such as the RSS frame wind up being employed by *all* of apology’s “principal actors” (Nobles,

2008).

In conclusion, if this stream of analysis is brought to its logical end, the conveyance of a pathological and *wounded* colonial subject who needs state intervention to become *whole* represents the apology's dominant *perlocutionary act*; the message that *got across* to the Canadian general public was one that perpetuated colonial representations and stereotypes. The framing strategies employed by media organizations, state actors, and quoted Indigenous leaders, successfully framed the apology's subjects as *broken* and *sick* colonial subjects while at the same time framing both the apology itself and the state as critical junctures of atonement and healing. Again, through the adoption of the RSS master frame, the *healing* state and the *deficient* pathological Indigenous person did not transform their colonial roles but rather solidified them in the traditional colonial relationship of oppression and domination. In other words, the apology acted as a codifying political solution that entrenched existing social relations through masking the realities of Canada's dominant social regimes (Brown, 1995: 12; also see Balfour, 2005: 789). At the same time as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors employed the RSS frame in hopes of attaining some form of meaningful reconciliation, recognition, and reparation(s), it concurrently legitimated and maintained the economic and political structures that have historically defined Canada's Indigenous-settler relationship in exploitive and inequitable terms. From this viewpoint, the relationship of domination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada has not been contested or transformed via the apology. It has rather been solidified and further entrenched.

Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, we would say that through the conduit of the apology's elicitation of emotion, our initial framing consideration, which explored how the apology was received in an evaluative sense, determined that the apology was largely viewed by media commentators and organizations as an outstanding, robust, and earnest declaration of apology, regret, contrition and reconciliation. While our initial consideration was satisfied, we were left wondering about the political significance of the emotion-based framing especially in regard to delegated and performative many-to-many apologies (Tavuchis, 1991); what were these discourses obscuring? In an attempt to answer this question, our second framing consideration, which asked what the apology was understood to be *for*, argued that the Canadian general public came to understand that the apology was "sorry for" the forced assimilation of Aboriginal children, child abuse, and the loss of Aboriginal culture. From this perspective, these noted violations acted as the apology's *locutionary act* (being the surface meaning of a statement).

While the apology acknowledged that the school's colonial policies of forced assimilation were wrongheaded and in fact regrettable, which was a defining distinction of the 2008 apology, the dominant *locutionary act* of both the apology itself and its representation in the media articles failed to connect said abuses to the macro-level political process of European imperialism, land/resource usurpation and racialized colonialism. By emphasizing personal emotion-based stories of injustice and by focusing on the loss of culture and regrettable abuses (all of which are abhorrent in and of themselves) the 2008 apology curtailed Canadians from participating in any widespread internal self reflection and struggle with their own position in Canada's colonial legacy.

Simply put, even though the 2008 apology's robust and commendable *locutionary act* distinguished itself from its sullied 1998 predecessor, by failing to both challenge Canada's colonial mythology and by protecting the structures of settler-privilege from scrutiny, the 2008 apology aided in the political project of retaining the status quo.

The media's understanding and representation of the apology further (re)entrenched prevailing pathological frames and narratives which have historically been utilized to marginalize Canada's Indigenous peoples. The media's coverage of the events and actors surrounding the apology were more than just the frameless uncontextualized conveyance of the apology's *locutionary act*. The discourses found within the articles, rather, framed the survivors as being *broken, sick*, and in need of state reparatory action in order to *heal*. Said another way, the apology's coverage relied heavily on the RSS *master frame* that portrayed both the state as a critical juncture of healing and Indigenous peoples as being deficient and pathological. The commitment or obligation for the state to *heal* and *repair* deficient Indigenous peoples is thus understood to be the apology's dominant *illocutionary act*. This is not to say that Indigenous actors, in a process of strategic frame alignment, rejected the RSS frame in its totality. In fact, even when we take into account the filtering effects of the media's perspective, many Indigenous actors, in an attempt to attain some form of wanted amends and atonement, strategically adopted aspects of the RSS frame.

This leads us to our final observation of this chapter. Even though political apology's role as a significant *tool of voice* and powerful *political symbol* have been underscored and respected, when political apologies are initiated in a colonial context it is often the case that the dominant frames that wind up being used are salient frames such as

the pathologizing RSS frame. In hopes of attaining some form of meaningful reconciliation, recognition and reparation(s), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political actors end up employing a frame that legitimates and maintains the economic and political structures that have historically defined Canadian Indigenous-settler relationships in exploitive and inequitable terms. In conclusion, even though the morally infused language of the 2008 apology has certainly brought both cathartic relief to countless survivors and has acted as a powerful *tool of voice* for marginalized voices, both the apology's heavy utilization of racialized pathological frames and obfuscation of Canada's racist, colonial, and imperial (not just assimilatory) legacy, signify a political solution that attempts to erase the historical unequal intergroup relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples which led to the initial, and continuing, colonial dominance.

We thus end our conversation in a precarious position; if the 2008 apology largely failed at revealing the true sociopolitical and historical significance of the residential schools, why did political actors from all sides move forward with the project? This question among others will define the final pages of this thesis. Moving forward from this discussion, the final few pages will be dedicated to exploring the 2008 apology's potential for being a "specific and contemporary practice of justice" (Balfour, 2005: 802) that can effectively "redeem the past" (ibid). In order to explore this facet of the apology properly the following pages will compare and contrast the accumulated findings of this thesis with the scholarship of notable reparation experts such as Barkan, Torpey, Brown, Corntassel/Holder, Balfour, Nobles, and James among others. The final pages will explore a constellation of future oriented questions such as: what political significance

does the apology have in Canada's future; does the apology succeed in its attempt to *make whole what has been smashed*; and what forms of contemporary emancipation does it potentially offer, if any? These are the final questions at hand.

Chapter 4

Reflections

This thesis began its conversation by outlining political apology's emergence in international narrative and how it signaled the burgeoning of both a novel political and academic phenomenon. We have come far. This thesis moved from the general to the specific by laying out the 2008 apology to Indian residential school survivors in its entirety in an attempt to capture its dominant interpretation so that the apology's political significance and role in future oriented discussions could be distilled. Said another way, instead of speaking of the 2008 apology as part of just a mere phenomenon, this thesis parsed out the specific apology in question to reveal both the message(s) that it *got across* to the Canadian general public and the forms of domination that the apology's seemingly progressive narratives belie. Furthermore, by attempting to balance both the apology's inspirational possibilities with the grievances cited by apology's critics, this analysis has resisted the alluring temptation for closure, a reductionist approach that sees reparation politics being fractured into unsatisfactory categories of either being *good* or *evil*.

The purpose of these last few pages will be an attempt to distill the accumulated perspectives of this thesis. Doing so will not only confront the possible unintended consequences of the apology's success, but it will also identify and acknowledge the apology's potential for acting as a site of progressive future-oriented struggle. In short, these last few pages will explore a question Lawrie Balfour poses in her piece, "Reparations *After* Identity Politics": if the political commitment and energy generated in the pursuit of reparations does not represent a progressive site of democratic struggle, "then what does?" (2005: 805). If reparation politics focuses its galvanized energies

around historically marginalized group identities does this effectively substitute other forms of emancipatory aspirations?

More specifically, because the political actors surrounding the 2008 apology aligned it with state sponsored structures and narratives (RSS frame) in order to produce some meaningful social change, does it necessarily mean that the apology's transformative potential has become inert, or even worse, that the apology has acted as a neocolonial force counteracting or usurping Indigenous strategies of self-determination? Even though these are the provocative questions at hand, they are questions that are of course not fully answerable. The diversity of Indigenous claims, grievances, political-economic wants, and transformative goals interrupts the issuance of any kind of definite answer. In fact, any robust or unilateral attempt to answer such a question falls into the dangerous practice of essentialism. That being said, while we still remain cognizant of these caveats, it still seems desirable to explore and confront the apology's possible unintended consequences in hopes of locating some form of satisfying answer.

We begin our final discussion by confronting the persuasive argument posed by reparation critics such as Wendy Brown (1995) and Eric Yamanoto (1997), who argue that by focusing on historically marginalized group identities, reparation politics have been used to support, rather than to transform, both state dominance and public perceptions of whose citizenship counts (Balfour, 2005: 798). Concerns over citizenship also informs Melissa Nobles' (2008) work, where she explores how official apologies have been employed by their principal actors to transform state membership and citizenship regimes. These meta-critiques of Brown and others largely argue that by reparation movements turning to the state for adjudication of past historical injustices, in

an attempt to relieve a history of marginalization and injustice, they in fact represent “a politics that abandons the aspiration to remake the state” (Balfour, 2005: 798). John Torpey also advances this concern, arguing that contemporary identity-based reparation movements symbolize a distraction from other movements dedicated to material changes in the lives of the oppressed. Even though some reparation advocates would disagree and counter that at their most radical, reparation discourses possess the “capacity to bring to public attention the complex and historical relation between capitalism and white supremacy” (Balfour, 2005: 798), others would disagree and likely view the movement surrounding the 2008 apology as part of the symbolic demise of class analysis and critiques of both colonialism’s and capitalism’s cultural and economic system of values. By grappling with these worries and concerns, and by grafting them onto the apologetic experience of 2008, we hope that it will reveal much about the apology’s transformational potential.

From a postcolonial perspective, with which this thesis has strived to align itself, the apology’s promise for a more egalitarian future seems at first dubious. For generations when the federal government promised a *stronger* or more *equal* Canada, the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island cumulatively learned to further prepare for the “dispossession of aboriginal lands, heritage, connection and identities” (James, 1998: 26; also see Johnstone, 1993). It is thus with fervent understanding that the promise of a more *equal*, and according to Prime Minister Harper, “stronger Canada for all of us” (2008), is often met with ambivalence or even hostility by Indigenous peoples. It thus begs the question, what processes of domination are being obscured by apology’s nationalist imbued rhetoric that promises a more egalitarian future?

This question directs our conversation to the tenuous interplay between reparations politics and national citizenship regimes (for more see Nobles, 2008). Even though this paper has employed Balfour's writings largely in defense of reparation politics, when reflecting upon reparation politics and political apologies in a colonial context Balfour's analysis falls short. Balfour's analysis is reflective of an American ethos, one regarding the injustices faced by Black Americans and not the colonial reality reflected in Corntassel's and Holder's writing. These two distinct populations maintain a completely unique set of political processes and citizenship regimes. In the United States, while there certainly are Black nationalism movements and debates regarding assimilation, there is virtually no discussion regarding an alternative to American citizenship. Therefore, even though the American political milieu is not favorable to reparations regarding Black Americans, the chasm between mainstream American objectives and the political objectives of American reparation movements is much narrower compared to the chasm between mainstream Canadian objectives and the political objectives of Canada's prominent Indigenous organizations. Said another way, the colonial context presents reparation politics with a major asymmetry between the political aspirations of many Indigenous organizations and communities, such as self-determination and land sovereignty, and the *master frames* within which Indigenous organizations must navigate their political discourses; the chasm of unintelligibility is a large and difficult gulf to bridge.

Corntassel and Holder, on the other hand, clearly speak to the Canadian colonial context. By crystalizing a set of reasons as to why political apologies are both politically difficult and often unenthusiastically received by many Indigenous peoples, they move

our conversation directly to Canada's *colonial* context. They argue that when viewing political apologies from a vantage point of Indigenous self-determination and decolonization, political apologies represent a "politics of distraction" strategy (2008: 22), where powerful policy elites construct Indigenous identities in terms of "individual, state citizens...rather than indigenous nations within the state" (ibid). Such framing, which gestures to the outlined RSS frame, not only distracts from "genuine reconciliation" (Corntassel and Holder, 2008: 22), which would entail "systematic examination of the past, a process of homeland restitution, and [a process that] holds institutions, as well as individuals accountable" (ibid), but also deflects critiques of state dominance and apparatuses of oppression by refusing to "go beyond ideas of national unity and modernization" (ibid). The accumulated message that can be distilled from the above critiques is that apologies, via the participation of their principal actors, strategically frame the discourses of truth and justice in a manner which both deflects and distracts social movements and political minority groups from mobilizing their committed energy against the more embedded sociopolitical and economic structures of dominance and oppression. While these criticisms are deemed reasonable and frankly valid, others argue that there may still be an effective and transformative strategy for reparation advocates that could effectively pierce through the armor of state dominance and potentially transform the hegemonic discourses against which their political agendas struggle.

Yet such transformation through reparation politics is an egregiously complex political equation. As previously mentioned, reparation politics is not just a novel terrain for political minority groups to navigate, but also a politically *difficult* one fraught with

obstacles. From a brief survey of Canada's Indigenous political landscape, we know that even the comparatively mainstream Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a multilayered and complex organization that struggles with "playing the hand dealt" to them while at the same time challenging the very foundations of the game (ie: Canada's political regime). This balancing act is difficult to maintain. Issues regarding self-determination, land sovereignty, and self-governance are discourses that are certainly within the AFN's multilayered political agenda and mandate, but because the discourses are hostile within contemporary Canadian politics, partly because they fail to resonate with state or mainstream media narrative frames, the AFN is coercively encouraged to take advantage of other political strategies and potential avenues for liberation. As was shown in the previous chapter, salient RSS discourses of "healing" and "repair" for "wounded" and "sick" individuals are intelligible and readily picked-up. Discourses that engage the litany of court cases regarding land/resource sovereignty, the persistent drive for self-determination, and the failure of the current Conservative Government to sign on and to move forward with both the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples and the Kelowna Accord, are comparatively more difficult to get on the official agenda and are thus largely ignored by state officials and media organizations.

To further explain we return to the study of *frame*. Because state actors cannot easily "locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large" (Goffman, 1974: 21) through discourses of Indigenous self-determination, Indigenous advocacy groups are forced to adopt discourses that *do* represent a "general, standardized, predefined structure" (Donati, 1992: 141) for Canadian state actors. Similarly said, because the perceived radical discourses of self-determination, land

sovereignty and self-governance are largely hostile to Canada's political regime and are thus not prevalent in daily discourse, organizations such as the AFN, with its multifaceted political agenda, strategically adopt and inhabit certain salient frames in order to become visible and more readily recognized by the powers that be in hopes of achieving some form of liberation for their constituents. Simply put, if Thucydides was correct in the assertion that "the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Gibney et al., 2007: 2), then the AFN and other Indigenous advocacy groups would arguably be invisible to the Canadian state. But they are not. Why? In part because through aligning themselves and their frames within salient and accepted discourses, their voices and their claims are pulled *into focus*, acknowledged, and recognized.

As noted in the previous chapter, because the more radical discourses of self-determination and resource sovereignty do not resonate with power holders, Indigenous advocacy groups are coercively pulled into *master frames* such as the RSS frame in order to be *heard*. This process results in obvious unintended repercussions, such as the perpetuation of pathological representations of Indigenous peoples, while at the same time providing a certain degree of *voice*, *legitimacy*, *redemption* from an *unjust* past, *healing* for school survivors, and *justice* for Indigenous peoples as a whole. Moreover, even though they largely speak from a non-colonial context, notables such as Lawrie Balfour (2005), Bill Lawson (1992), and Robert Westley (1998), agree with this characterization by arguing that reparation politics can "redeem the past through a specific and contemporary practice of justice" (Balfour, 2005: 802). Firstly, reparation politics has the potential to provide a critical discourse that serves as a "counterweight to

race-blind language and incorporates acknowledgment of the past into the present practices...and secondly, by offering an avenue for concrete social change” (Balfour, 2005: 802). Furthermore, one of the real contributions of reparation politics is its ability to galvanize a range of actors, including “grassroots activists as well as lawyers, lawmakers and academics (Balfour, 2005: 805). Elazar Barkan, in his book *The Guilt of Nations*, also argues that reparation politics has the potential to “fuse polarized antagonistic histories into a core of shared history to which both sides can subscribe” (2000: 349). Alan Cairns also sees the powerful attraction of redress movements, stating that by contesting the past they build a “more dignified future”(cited in James, 1998: 24). In an attempt to crystalize these positions, one cannot deny the significance of AFN Chief Phil Fontaine rising in the House of Commons after the apology’s issuance to address the institution which originally sanctioned and praised the schools “genocidal intent”; he was arguably not standing there believing in the egalitarianism or race-blind fairness of the Canadian state so much as, in his own words, “an achievement of the impossible” (cited in Canada, 2008).

Therefore, even in the face of fervent opposition and criticism, it seems reasonable to allocate much credibility and validity to these perspectives that underscore apology's transformative or progressive potential for justice seekers. From our postcolonial perspective their arguments represent what reparation politics and apologies *can* achieve, not necessarily what they *will* achieve. This distinction between apology’s potential and its defined powers becomes even more clear when we move our conversation back to the specific apology of 2008 and reintroduce ourselves to the realities surrounding its issuance and interpretation. Simply said, after further reflection on the 2008 apology one

cannot be too optimistic about its transformative potential. According to Bill Lawson, the most persuasive reparation claims derive their power from reworking the vocabulary that informed the history of oppression (1992: 72). Taking into account the findings in chapter three, even though the 2008 apology did in fact *derive* its power from the language that legitimated a history of oppression, it is argued that by political actors and media organizations employing colonial and pathological narratives, such as the widely utilized RSS frame, the apology failed to *rework* or *transform* the language that legitimated colonial oppression.

This is not necessarily a condemnation of political apologies *themselves*, but rather a testament to their operability and successfulness in a colonial context where power disparities are gross and unjust. As was illustrated in chapter one with Australia's political apology experience, when the colonial context is taken seriously, political apologies, according to Gunstone and Short, often result in the “rights and needs of Indigenous peoples [being] ‘mainstreamed’ to equal those of ‘all Australians’, with little recognition of Indigenous history, the past injustice, and particularly its legacy in the present” (cited in Reynolds, 2009: 247). Therefore, while respecting the diversity of hopes and dreams that were placed into the apology’s utterance, when Canada’s colonial history and sociopolitical realities are taken into serious account, through the 2008 apology’s wide utilization of pathologizing frames (which made the state the *healer* and the Indigenous subject *deficient* and *wounded*) the apology’s verbose promise for both a progressive transformation towards a shared *middle ground* and a new and more equal future needs to be ardently tempered.

As has been argued throughout the previous chapters, the apology made both a

robust and commendable account of the school's violations, which distinguished it from its 1998 predecessor. By providing an explicit renunciation of assimilationist policies, which no doubt both enlightened and broadened the consciousness of many Canadians, and brought cathartic relief to many survivors and communities, in the end the apology's dominant interpretation proved to be not much more than a re-articulation of past historical and pathologizing discourses. The RSS frame dominated the apology's coverage; it transformed the schools, its victims, the Canadian state, and the apology itself into a set of salient components, intelligible to the general public. Even though Balfour's argument that apologies can provide a "counterweight to race-blind language and incorporate acknowledgment of the past into the present practices" (2008: 802) is acknowledged and hoped for, the reality of the 2008 apology demands a more cautious evaluation.

When an apology reifies and perpetuates historical pathological narratives that have constructed Indigenous peoples as *docile*, *sick*, and *broken* colonial subjects needing state repair and civilizing, it cannot be reasonably said that the apology counteracted anything except what Corntassel and Holder call "genuine reconciliation" (2008: 22). In fact, from this perspective, the 2008 apology largely fell into the interpretation schema presented by Corntassel and Holder. Even though the apology's *perlocutionary effects* are still at play, this thesis has argued that through the employment of the dominant RSS frame the 2008 apology has largely restricted discourses of self-determination and homeland restitution by reifying national unity, normalizing state modernization, prioritizing Canadian citizenship, and implementing "cheap reconciliation" (Corntassel and Holder, 2008: 23) strategies which are then subsequently cancelled (for more see

Rabson, 2010: A.5). Furthermore, because the apology failed at calling out the historical processes of political colonization, European imperialism, and land/resource usurpation, the official apology successfully obstructed any widespread internal self reflection and struggle by Canadians regarding their participation in Canada's colonial legacy.

Yet there is still hope; in politics doors never close. The *perlocutionary effects* of the apology on its recipients and audiences are not unilaterally controlled by any one actor; they are still at play. Looking back to the previous chapter's *tool of voice* analysis, we have argued that in the Canadian colonial context there are state discourses and narratives that have proven to be quasi-hegemonic in their utilization and framing power. This does not necessarily negate progressive projects from reaching their genesis via the apology. In fact, other social movements such as gay rights, feminism, and anti-racism movements have all endeavored to pierce through and transform inaccurate and oppressive past judgments that viewed their constituencies as inferior, immoral or somehow deficient. Apology's *potential* to act as a mobilizing force in a similar vein may be heightened if we instead emphasized its symbolic *struggle* rather than its political *outcome*; *struggle* denotes a democratic exercise of perpetual contestation while *outcome* denotes a closed and non-future-oriented frontier. By reflecting on this distinction between outcome and struggle we may be able to see the 2008 apology as providing a *possible* avenue to investigate "the public meanings of a history long suppressed [and the] received explanations of present racial hierarchies" (Balfour, 2005: 804; also see McCathry, 1997). Because the 2008 apology made significant improvements from the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation, one can hope that the next watershed moment in our shared political future may symbolize a project more radical, transformative, and

liberating than what was seen in the 2008 apology.

We thus end our conversation faced with the unsettling reality that our morally infused political vocabulary, hailed by scholars such as Barkan and Lawson, often proves both morally and politically unsatisfying and inadequate when attempting to reveal the complex colonial relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations. It may therefore be more appropriate to view the apology of 2008 not as a political solution denoting closure, but rather a dynamic tool of *struggle* destined to move forward into an open frontier. Even though our conversation demands us to temper verbose positive judgments regarding the 2008 apology, its *perlocutionary effects* may very well act as a catalyzing force to a new and more transformative form of politics. This future-oriented perspective seems to be the most satisfying.

The Circle Game

To end our conversation we return to Chrisjohn et al.'s book *The Circle Game* (1997). In a revealing and moving epilogue the authors explain the meaning behind their title. They state that the *circle* has metaphorical meaning for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures other than being just a simple shape of geometry. Yet, through their research and work on residential schools the authors began to see the *circle* as a metaphor for “the head-long rush to nowhere in particular...where we become carried away, imperceptibly, from the starting point” (1997: 133). Their voiced starting point was the goal of uncovering the truth behind residential schools, an exploration that has been partly summarized throughout this thesis. But through their journey they found themselves being drawn into *the circle game*, they found themselves and their narrative

being taken away, carried off by the people who were supposed to be listening *to them*. Comments made by gatekeepers of officializing language such as “oh, I understand about residential schools...my parents sent me to boarding school, too!” (Chrisjohn et al., 199: 133) began to ring through their heads. What were the authors to do? They wanted off the carousel, they wanted to exit *the circle game* and return to their starting point.

From our perspective the *circle* is not some abstract metaphor simply denoting a form of distraction, it is rather a conceptualization of the colonial state and the narratives that have framed both our understandings and justifications of our shared colonial legacy. It is thus the greatest hope of this thesis that it may in some small way contribute to the project of getting people off the dizzying carousel -- to leave *the circle game*. Hopefully, through the careful consideration of the political and social significance of the 2008 apology to Canada’s Indian residential school survivors, this project has in some way succeeded in revealing the “shadows of rhetoric” (Chrisjohn et al., 1997: 133) that so often carry people away from understanding and toward darkness. If this thesis has at all been successful, its readers will be inspired to look down and see their own shadows, so they in unity with others can begin to *square the circle game*.

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Appendix

Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools

[Statements by Ministers]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, before I begin officially, let me just take a moment to acknowledge the role of certain colleagues here in the House of Commons in today's events. Although the responsibility for the apology is ultimately mine alone, there are several of my colleagues who do deserve the credit.

First of all, for their hard work and professionalism, I want to thank both the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and his predecessor, now the Minister of Industry. Both of these gentlemen have been strong and passionate advocates not just of today's action, but also of the historic Indian residential schools settlement that our government has signed.

Second, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my former colleague from Cariboo--Chilcotin, Philip Mayfield, who for a very long time was a determined voice in our caucus for meaningful action on this sad episode of our history.

Last, but certainly not least, I do want to thank my colleague, the leader of the New Democratic Party. For the past year and a half, he has spoken to me with regularity and great conviction on the need for this apology. His advice, given across party lines and in confidence, has been persuasive and has been greatly appreciated.

[Translation]

I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools. The treatment of children in these schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian residential schools separated over 150,000 aboriginal children from their families and communities.

[English]

In the 1870s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligations to educate aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools.

Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal.

Indeed, some sought, as was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child".

[Translation]

Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

[English]

Most schools were operated as joint ventures with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and United churches.

The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes and often taken far from their communities.

Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.

Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools, and others never returned home.

[Translation]

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

[English]

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors who have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strengths of their cultures.

Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential schools system.

[English]

To the approximately 80,000 living former students and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures

and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that far too often these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you.

Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

[*Translation*]

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever again prevail.

[*English*]

You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time, and in a very real sense we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

[*Translation*]

We are sorry.

[*English*]

[*Nimitataynan. Niminchinowesamin. Mamiattugut.*]

In moving toward healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian residential schools, the implementation of the Indian residential schools settlement agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities and aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the settlement agreement is the Indian residential schools truth and reconciliation commission. This commission represents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian residential schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

God bless all of you. God bless our land.