

*Mea Maxima Culpa:*

**The Political Apology as an Instrument of Public Policy in Canada**

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Given the recent proliferation of official state apologies in Canada, it may be surprising to some that the *apologia politica*<sup>1</sup> is a rather new phenomena, marking what certain authors have described the dawn of an age of expiation (see Olick and Coughlin, 2003: 37-38; Barkan and Karn, 2006: 25; Howard-Hassmann and Gibney, 2008: 2-4). Indeed, the federal government has issued seven official apologies over the past two and a half decades in an effort to come to terms with the wrongs of its past, beginning in 1988 with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's apology for the internment of Japanese Canadians in British Columbia during World War II, and lately in 2010 with Stephen Harper's apology to the families of the victims of Air India Flight 182. This recent proliferation should not be mistaken, however, for unanimity over the nature of political apologies. Indeed, whether apologies should be delivered and how, by whom, where and what they include, and most importantly perhaps, what work they perform, have proven to be contested notions, effectively demonstrated in all of Canada's recent apologies.

The first section of this paper seeks to describe the political apology through the identification of its defining elements and a chronicle of its social and political work. This section aims to demonstrate how the political apology operates schismatically to simultaneously achieve and undermine its conciliatory and strategic objectives. My description of the political apology will draw upon Canada's history of official political apologies, which include the 1988 apology to Japanese Canadians for the government's policy of internment and deportation during World War II; the 1990 apology to Italian Canadians for their internment during World War II; the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation to Canada's Indigenous Peoples for Canada's policy of forced removal and residential schooling; the 2006 apology to Chinese Canadians for the Chinese head

tax and exclusionary legislation; the 2008 apology to Canada's Indigenous Peoples for its policy of residential schooling; the 2008 apology to Canada's South Asian community for the *Komagata Maru* incident<sup>2</sup>; the 2010 apology to the families of the victims of Air India Flight 182 for the Canadian government's institutional failings in responding to the tragedy; and the 2010 apology to Canada's Inuit community for their relocation to the High Arctic.

Although it remains envired in controversy, the political apology has scarcely appeared in theory and research on the Canadian public policy process. Indeed, much of the literature examining the instruments of public policy neglects to embrace the apology within their typologies. This begs the following questions: what is the place of the political apology within the study of public policy, and more specifically, is the political apology an instrument of public policy? Commencing from these questions, the second section of this paper will root the political apology within the typological frameworks used to understand public policy instruments, while recognizing the way in which these systems of categorization are complicated, and necessarily expanded, through its inclusion.

While defining, categorizing and understanding the work that policy instruments perform is critical to the policy process, so too is their evaluation. In *The Tools of Government: A Guide to New Governance*, Lester Salamon argues for the assessment of policy instruments against five criteria, namely their effectiveness, efficiency, equity, manageability and political feasibility and legitimacy (2002: 22). While a full evaluation of the political apology is beyond the scope of this paper, I will provide some concluding thoughts toward the assessment of this policy instrument. In particular, I will focus on

the extent to which the political apology achieves its conciliatory objectives (i.e. its effectiveness) and the legitimacy of its selection as a tool for public action. Building on questions of legitimacy, I will also argue that the political apology's mixed results may be related to issues of problem definition, that is the notion that political actors are unclear as to the issue that this tool is intended to address. Through these preliminary gestures toward an evaluation of the political apology, I hope to move toward the identification of the normative precepts necessary for more meaningful future incarnations of the political apology.

*Understanding the Political Apology, A Working Definition*<sup>3</sup>

While the ubiquity of the interpersonal apology lends itself to a certain interpretive fluency, its phenomenon in the political arena takes on distinct meaning, requiring exploration (Celemajer, 2009: 43). But before expounding upon the significance and key characteristics of the political apology, it is worth considering its commonplace interpersonal manifestation. In his sociological examination of the apology, Tachuvis notes that we apologize for that which is inexcusable, acts for which there is no justification or defense (Tachuvis, 1991: 17). As Tachuvis notes, "one who apologizes seeks forgiveness and redemption for what is unreasonable, unjustified, undeserving, and inequitable (Tachuvis, 1991: 17). This is furthered in Derrida's rhetorical gesture, wherein he asks is only the unforgivable worth forgiveness (2001: 32)? Can there only be forgiveness where and when the unforgivable exists (Derrida, 2001: 33)? Indeed, by Tachuvis' account, the apology's power emanates from the risk of its

rejection, that the offender may remain in a state of purgatory and social repudiation (1991: 18).

Tachuvis not only inquires after what apologies contain but also examines what we understand them to *be*, both in philosophic and linguistic terms. Building on the work of J.L. Austin, Tachuvis argues that apologies fall within a particular class of performative speech (Tachuvis, 1991: 22-23). By apologizing, one is not merely *saying* something; by saying sorry, the apologizer is *doing* something. But when manifesting within a political enterprise, the apology is not simply a “behabitive” speech-act (Austin, 1976: 160; Celemajer, 2009: 50). Indeed, the apologetic gesture takes on a variety of illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings (Celemajer, 2009: 50). In other words, what we do *in* and *by* apologizing in the political arena is not simply emotive (Celemajer, 2009: 50). It is precisely these forces that distinguish the political apology from its everyday apparitions.

Celemajer reflects on these different forces in her account of what is generally seen in a political apology within the Canadian context. For Celemajer, political apologies often include some combination of the following: (1) an account of the past - its affects and effects; (2) an expression of regret; (3) an offering of apology, i.e. saying sorry; (4) self-implication, i.e. taking responsibility for what was done; and (5) a commitment to a different future. In each of the political apology’s constituent parts, we see more than the emotive at play. In saying sorry, political actors are judging the past, henceforth officializing a particular narrative of it as truth, advancing a “public position” in relation to the past and the future, and committing to a “different identity and set of normative precepts into the future” (Celemajer, 2009: 53). Celemajer’s examination of

the political apology underscores its relationship to national identity – through its enactment, political actors carefully communicate their vision of what the nation has been, what it has become and what it could be.

This is well evidenced in Canada's 2008 apology for its policy of residential schooling, wherein Prime Minister Stephen Harper provides the following account of Canada's residential schooling policy:

For more than a century, Indian residential schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children...and assimilate them...very young children were forcibly removed...many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed (Harper, 2008).

Next, Harper acknowledges the effects of Canada's action, stating: "the government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a long lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language" (Harper, 2008). Harper offers apology to living former students, their families and communities, six separate times in his speech – for the forcible removal of Aboriginal children; the abuse and neglect that occurred in the state's inadequately controlled institutions; the separation of children from their families, communities, cultures and languages; and for the cycle of violence and abuse perpetuated by this government action (Harper, 2008). Finally, accounting a vision of Canada's past and future, Harper states

There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system...[Canada is] moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools...[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada] will be a positive first step in forging new relationships 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 together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us (Harper, 2008).

Harper's apology for Canada's policy of residential schooling demonstrates each of the key tenets of the performative gesture – in apologizing, he creates an official narrative of residential schooling as a disastrous form education and assimilation policy and envisions a strong, shared Canadian future. Simultaneously, Harper acts in both a conciliatory and strategic fashion – seeking forgiveness for the past with a gaze fixed resolutely upon the future of his nation.

We see this determined futurology<sup>4</sup> in Harper's 2010 apology to the families of victims of Air India Flight 182. After acknowledging Canada's failures in responding to the incident, Harper calls for a future security and immigration strategy that limits "opportunities" for imported terrorism (2010):

[w]e fear that when we invite from around the world those who share our aspirations for a better life, others also come, those who see in Canada not new bridges to a hopeful future but only another chance to travel the old

roads to the blood-feuds of the past... It is incumbent upon us all not to reach out to, but rather marginalize, those extremists who seek to import the battles of India's past here and then to export them back to that great and forward-seeking nation (Harper, 2010).

As Failler notes, Harper's apology does not seek to dwell upon the past, namely the Canadian government's institutional failings, but rather "keep[s] the critical gaze turned outward," futurally fixed upon our ability to recognize the "face of terror" through new iterations of immigration and security policy (2012: 262-263). Harper's preoccupation with futurology is even more apparent in his 2008 apology for the *Komagata Maru* incident, wherein he states "we can bring Canadians together in the present to unite our country and to set us on a course to accomplish greater things in the future" (Harper, 2008).

It is important to note that a broadened understanding of the political apology's work, as evidenced in Harper's residential schools and Air India Flight 182 apologies, does not, however, divorce it from its emotive roots. Indeed, the apology's heritage remains alongside its commissive, predictive, verdictive and, hence, its politically strategic ends. Apologies that do not display sincerity are at risk of not being received by the offended, and consequently condemn the offender to a continued state of wrongdoing. Furthermore, the political apology's strategic ends rely upon its reception for its effectiveness. For example, Somani recounts the immediate rejection that followed Harper's delivery of the *Komagata Maru* apology: "as Harper walks off the stage, another kind of performance beings. Stepping up the podium, members of the South Asian community vehemently denounce (rather than cordially accept), insisting that it



should have been made in Parliament rather than a park” (2011: 9). In this instance of political apology, which will be revisited in the final section of this paper, the location of the apology and its alleged unofficialness were read by the offended as a lack of sincerity and interrupted the apology’s messages of national unity, opportunity and multiculturalism (Somani, 2011: 16). It is not just a lack of sincerity that interrupts our potential reception of the political apology’s message. Indeed, the multiple ends of the political apology result in a sort of inherent tension wherein its affective and strategic objectives result in “uneven reception and interpretive confusion” (Celemajer, 2009: 50). As demonstrated with the *Komagata Maru* case, the inconsistent, even at times, contradictory elements of the political apology appear numerous times within its Canadian incarnations.

In addition to the political apology’s philosophical characteristics, the speech-act employs a number of procedural devices, equally important to its social and political functionality. Gibney and Roxstrom argue for the importance of publicity and ceremony to our consideration of political apologies (2001: 927-928). The relative emphasis that is placed on where apologies are delivered, who speaks on behalf of the state and their availability post-enactment varies considerably across political apologies in Canada. For Matt James, the employment of these characteristics directly affects the degree of apology, in other words whether we consider the speech-act a full apology, quasi-apology or non-apology (2008: 139). In accordance with James’ criteria, a lack of available written record, delivery in institutions other than Parliament and delivery by politicians other than the Prime Minister changes whether the political apology sincerely expresses regret, whether it is indeed a political apology (2008: 138). Variations in these criteria

are evidenced across Canada's apologetic record. While the residential schools apology, the Air India, *Komagata Maru*, Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act and Japanese Internment apologies were all delivered by Prime Ministers of Canada, the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation with Canada's Aboriginal peoples was delivered by then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jane Stewart and the 2010 apology for the relocation of Inuit communities to the High Arctic was delivered by then Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, John Duncan. Notably these two apologies were also delivered outside of Parliament at community events or private functions, also evidenced in the Air India and *Komagata Maru* apologies.

James also highlights the importance of having a written, available record to political apologies, allowing "group members on both sides [the opportunity] to judge the reconciliatory work attempted in their names" (2008: 138). As he notes, the availability of an official written record is tied to whether the apology is performed in Parliament, as those performed as part of official ceremony are memorialized as part of the "official parliamentary record" (James, 2008: 140). Apologies delivered outside of Parliament do not require the same type of documentation; indeed the availability of apologetic records delivered outside of Parliament relies upon government publication or media coverage and are not official or permanent. James points to fragmented recollections of the Italian internment apology, pieced together through media reportings of the time (2008: 147). Somani also reflects on the lack of available record for the *Komagata Maru* apology, noting "[the apology] has not been made available on the Government of Canada's official website...I made several attempts – all of which were failures – to gain access to the official transcript of the apology...I was informed that the official apology would not

be made available to me [by government] and I should search for it elsewhere” (2011: 11).

Before turning to an assessment of the political apology within the Canadian context, the implications of the political apology for our understanding of the public policy process should be considered. If indeed, the political apology is not simply emotive, but rather a performative gesture uttered by political actors to achieve certain strategic objectives, then it should be understood as a instrument for attaining policy goals. The next section of this paper examines the relationship between the political apology and policy instrument theory to elucidate this connection.

*The Neglected Tool: The Apology as a Policy Instrument*

While the Government of Canada has issued seven official political apologies since 1988, the apology has not figured in literature as a tool of public policy. Canada’s recent incarnations of the political apology include the 1988 apology to Japanese Canadians for the government’s policy of internment and deportation during World War II; the apology to Italian Canadians for their internment during World War II; the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation to Canada’s Indigenous Peoples for Canada’s policy of forced removal and residential schooling; the 2006 apology to Chinese Canadians for the Chinese head tax and exclusionary legislation; the 2008 apology to Canada’s Indigenous Peoples for its policy of residential schooling; the 2008 apology to Canada’s South Asian community for the *Komagata Maru* incident; the 2010 apology to the victims of Air India Flight 182 for the Canadian government’s institutional failings in responding to the tragedy; and the 2010 apology to Canada’s Inuit community for their forced relocation to the High Arctic.

For Lester Salamon, a policy instrument is best understood as an “identifiable method through which collective action is structured to address a public problem” (2002: 19). In his definition, Salamon emphasizes three crucial properties of a policy instrument: firstly, that a policy instrument is identifiable through a consideration of its defining design features; second, that a policy instrument structures a particular form of action, and consequently can be understood as an institution, through a neo-institutionalist theoretical perspective; and third, that a policy instrument (or instruments) structures collective action, in response to public problems (2002: 19-20).

In contrast with Salamon’s characterization of policy instruments as identifiable, collectivist and action-oriented, Vedung emphasizes the discursive nature of policy instruments, contending that policy instruments deal with political power (2010: 21). This definition purports policy instruments to be the “set of techniques by which government authorities *wield their power* in attempting to ensure support and effect or prevent social change” (Vedung, 2010: 21, emphasis added). Howlett’s consideration of policy instruments as approaches to governance that involve the use or limitation of state authority, reflects Vedung’s preoccupation with power (2005, 31). Howlett’s definition of policy instruments also highlights an important consideration noted in the work of Les Pal, that is the notion that a policy instrument can involve the “act of doing nothing,” consequently expanding Howlett’s definition to include the abeyancy of state authority, not simply its limitation, but also its idleness (Pal, 2010: 156-157).

Policy instrument theory not only seeks to define the policy instrument, but also to identify a typological framework for comparing and categorizing the tools of governance. Salamon acknowledges the variations that exist across instrument classifications, largely

stemming from their preoccupations with different dimensions of policy tools (2002: 22). In one of the earliest works charting policy instruments, Harold Laswell conceives of these tools as including the “manipulation of symbols, signs and icons” (Howlett, 2007: 34). As instrument theory evolves, its typologies move from broad philosophical ends to more explicit delineations (Howlett, 2007: 35). In this new light, we see the emergence of Anderson’s typology, which posits four classes of government tools based upon the degree of freedom or compulsion appropriate for the particular circumstance (2010: 22-23). These include (1) market mechanisms – allowing individuals the freedom of choice and decision without the interference or coercion of government; (2) structured options – government programs to which individuals can choose to subscribe; (3) biased options – the use of incentives and deterrents to encourage individuals toward a desired policy outcome; and (4) regulation – directly controlling individual action using the coercive powers of government toward a particular policy outcome (Vedung, 2010: 23).

While Anderson’s categorizations centre around the concept of coercion and state power, Christopher Hood typifies policy instruments according to the reason for their use (2007: 3-5). This system of categorization examines two broad dimensions: that of *detection* and *effection*, further considering the basic resources at a government’s disposal to accomplish these ends (2007: 3-5). These resources include nodality (occupying a central position within information and social networks), authority (“the possession of legal and/or official power”), treasure (“the possession of stock of moneys or ‘fungible chattels’”) and organization (the possession and arrangement of individuals with skills, land, buildings, technological resources and materials) (Hood, 2007: 6).

While Hood's choice driven typological design has remained a seminal touch-point for policy instrument theory, it has been challenged for its partial foundation. Howlett notes its preoccupation with, what he terms, substantive policy tools, an absorption also found in the analysis that of Anderson and Pal, who contemplate policy instruments according to the level of state engagement required for its use (Pal, 149-152). According to Howlett, substantive instruments have a direct effect on the nature of "types, quantities and distribution of the goods and services provided in society" (Howlett, 2000: 415). They include an assortment of tools and instruments, such as grants, loans, tax expenditures, user charges, state agencies and other forms of bureaucratic administration, etc., which rely upon different forms of resources for their effectiveness (Howlett, 2010: 392-393).

The concern with substantive instruments in the work of Salamon, Anderson and Hood is unsurprising, given their visibility and palpability, but Howlett notes the importance of policy processes and the way in which they are constructed to achieve certain objectives (Howlett, 2007: 35). Termed "procedural policy instruments" by Howlett, these tools concern themselves with guiding and steering "policy processes in the direction government wishes through the manipulation of policy actors and their interrelationships" (2000: 424). Indeed, procedural instruments "take the state itself – its structure and management – as a target of public policy" (Pal, 2010: 189). Procedural instruments manifest in hearings, commissions, institutional-bureaucratic reform, education, advertising, training, census-taking, polling, policing, agreements, advisory group creation, research and intervenor funding, etc. (Howlett, 2010: 393). While these two basic categories cover a great range of policy tools, their basic infrastructure does not

provide for the idiosyncratic nature of the political apology. While the political apology is clearly neither a good nor a service; it is not easily considered a procedural device intended to alter policy processes.<sup>5</sup> As Howlett notes, the procedural policy instrument is intended to, among other things, create and manipulate the relationship of target groups to policy systems. While one could understand these ends as a potential consequence of the political apology's use, reinforced by the BC's governments recently leaked policy position on "historic" apologies as "quick wins" toward ethnic voter engagement,<sup>6</sup> such a reading undermines the political apology's potential as a reconciliatory and nation-building aims. Indeed, the political apology's multiple ends largely precludes it from being understood within procedural instrument typologies.

While the broad class of tools referenced in the work of Howlett does not contain the metaphysical latitude capable of lending a home to the political apology, other theoretical work remains worthy of consideration, including Evert Vedung's analysis of the "sermon" as a tool of public policy. For Vedung, the sermon represents governments' "softest and most lenient policy tool," the tool of information (2010: 104). It manifests in the "diffusion of printed materials like brochures, pamphlets, booklets, folders, fliers, bulletins, handbills, and posters; advertising; labeling; demonstration programs; education efforts; and other forms of amassing, packaging, and diffusion of knowledge and recommendations" (Vedung, 2010: 103). According to Vedung, the "public information" instrument is used to inform, judge and persuade (2010: 104). This perspective is reflected in Janet A. Weiss' "Public Information," where she states "in communicating what is and what may be, these policies may send strong signals about what should be" (2002: 219).

Weiss and Vedung's analysis of public information policy tools makes an important finding, reflected in earlier definition of the political apology. Like the political apology's strategic ends, public information tools can be used to relay state convictions and judgments, whether those notions related to tobacco use or broader issues of national identity. While this similarity is important, one significant difference precludes the apology from being classified as an informational tool – it is not information. As noted in its definition, the political apology is in and of itself, a speech-act. It is a performative gesture, allowing a political actor to, among other things, regretfully acknowledge a past offense of the state. To consider an apology simply another piece of information being communicated by a government official greatly underestimates its reconciliatory power. Indeed, while apologies and governmental information may be delivered via similar means (speeches, official records), the delivery of information and the delivery of an apology are categorically different in function.

Given political apologies and public information lack a natural accordance, it is worth examining the apology within Schneider and Ingram less widely cited behavioural taxonomy of policy instruments. Rather than choice or coercion, Schneider and Ingram's taxonomy examines policy instruments in accordance with the behaviours that the tools seek to elicit, leading to a fivefold distinction: (1) authority tools, (2) incentive tools, (3) capacity tools, (4) symbolic and hortatory tools, and (5) learning tools (1990: 514). Schneider and Ingram's class of symbolic and hortatory instruments is of particular interest to this analysis. As the authors note, this breed of instrument "assumes target populations are more apt to comply with behaviour desirable from a policy perspective if the targets see the behaviour as consistent with their beliefs" (Schneider and Ingram:



1990: 519). Thus, symbolic and hortatory tools are designed to “encourage compliance, utilization or support of policy...without the need for coercive incentive driven government intervention...giving deference to some values over others even though no tangible actions are taken to promote the goals or values” (Schneider and Ingram, 1990: 519).

Schneider and Ingram’s theory of symbolic and hortatory policy instruments highlights a number of important considerations for my attempt to typify the somewhat elusive political apology. Like symbolic and hortatory tools, the political apology calls upon certain intangible values, a desire to heal past wrongs and call for restorative justice. Perhaps where the political apology diverges from, or expands, the taxonomical considerations of Schneider and Ingram’s work is that the expression of regret necessarily looks inward; calling upon a self-reflexivity that is not only seeking to persuasively change the beliefs of others. In other words, in apologizing, political actors seek to understand the state as subject to its own conceptions of justice and fairness; that it has been wrong, done wrong and is seeking forgiveness. Through its inclusion in Schneider and Ingram’s taxonomy, the political apology requires symbolic and hortatory tools to be reflexive in practice, not only seeking to persuade external change but internal change, as well.

The political apology also extends Schneider and Ingram’s understanding of symbolic and hortatory in a second, important way. According to Schneider and Ingram, symbolic and hortatory tools often achieve their ends through intangible action. While the apology has an immaterial quality, the work of Tachuvis and Austin identifies it as a performative speech-act, a first step in the initiation of reconciliation. As noted by

Gibney and Howard-Hassmann, “our hope is that these apologies will have political consequences; that they will lessen the level of bitterness, anguish, and desire for revenge among victims; and that they will engender in perpetrators a genuine understanding of past harms and a genuine feeling of remorse...it will contribute to reconciliation and trust, both elements, we believe that are crucial for democratic civic interaction” (2008: 8). Gibney and Howard-Hassmann recognize that transformative power of reconciliation, its contribution to deliberative democratic engagement, which must involve reciprocity, dialogue, accountability and transparency, as noted by Laforest and Phillips (2007: 71).<sup>7</sup>

With seven incarnations since 1988, the political apology has clearly become part of the government’s toolkit; however this paper has shown that understanding it as a tool of public policy has complicating implications for instrument theory. The nebulous political apology has not easily found a home within the popular choice-based taxonomies, nor is it considered within coercive classifications that understand policy tools in terms of political power. While Schneider and Ingram’s behavioural typology accounts for instruments that call upon intangible values, the political apology expands the boundedness of their typifications by allowing reflexive and performative symbolic and hortatory gestures. This analysis attempts to demonstrate that the diversity found within the modern tools of governance is not necessarily reflected in the systems we use to understand these instruments. Indeed, the inclusion of the political apology within instrument theory requires its expansion, an extension that may allow us to see and understand other forms of government action not currently represented within the theoretical systems we use to understand public policy

*Concluding Observations: Assessing the Political Apology in Action*

As an instrument of public policy, the political apology serves dual ends, concerned both with reconciliation and nation-making, however, this understanding of the political apology does not tell us how well it performs and whether this schismic preoccupation affects the apology's objectives. To assess policy instruments, Salamon argues for their evaluation against the following criteria: 1) efficiency, the extent to which an instrument meets its desired objectives; 2) efficiency, a balancing of the instrument's results against its costs; 3) equity, the tool's commitment to basic fairness and redistribution; 4) its implementability; and 5) its legitimacy and political feasibility, in other words, whether the tool will be politically supported and/or considered appropriate for public action (2002: 23-24). While this paper cannot thoroughly evaluate the political apology against each of Salamon's criteria, it is worth providing a few appraising observations, which I hope will contribute to a more fulsome analysis of the apology in action within the Canadian context.

The notion of critically assessing the work performed by the political apology is certainly not new. Indeed, scholars have examined the work of the political apology through different disciplinary lenses, largely sociology and cultural studies, including Pauline Wakeham and Jennifer Henderson who claim that reconciliation and apology is "co-opted" to "cleanse the national image" and narrowly suggests the need for healing among Indigenous peoples, rather than problematizing and pathologizing colonialism (2009: 16-17); Somani who argues that, in practice, the political apology is used to manage diasporic communities - although important opportunities for activism emerge through its performance (2011: 5-6); Failler who asserts the Air India Flight 182 apology

is enacted to support the securitization of the state and the naming of terrorist “others” (2012: 262-263); and finally, James who accuses the state of “using an apologetic occasion to broadcast permanent evidence of purported Canadian virtue” and consequently, “sulli[es] the earnestness of purpose that ought to characterize an official apology for official racism” (2008: 149). In addition to these criticisms, the political apology’s preoccupation with futurity is also problematic. In constructing the nation as concerned with what is to come, victims of historical wrongs become an obstruction; hindering national progress and economic success. In both the *Komagata Maru* apology, as well as the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act apology, Harper validates this concern, wherein he states: “before we can all move forward together as Canadians and achieve our full potential, we must first lay to rest the past wrong of the head tax.” (Harper, 2006). In these instances, apologies have less to do with revisiting the past, than they do ushering the offended into the future.

While these criticisms are vital to understanding the performative implications of the political apology, the field of public policy has much to contribute to an evaluative understanding of the apology’s social and political work. In fact, the lens of public policy theory would suggest that these diverse scholars are in fact examining the *effectiveness* and *legitimacy* of the instrument in action, in other words whether the political apology achieves its desired ends and whether it is the appropriate tool for accomplishing task of reconciliation. One could read the suggested ineffectiveness of the political apology as an issue of problem definition, in other words a discrepancy between how we understand what is and what should be (Pal, 2010: 110). In revisiting Canada’s political apologies, it remains unclear as to whether their aim is to facilitate reconciliation

among *individual* victims of national wrongs, or whether their primary concern is with *national* healing and the ushering in of a new state identity. As Pal notes, the introduction of effective public policy and ensuring the implementation of the *right* policy instrument requires a clearly defined problem and set of policy objectives. In the case of political apologies, determining who and what requires reconciliation may change the way in which the tool is enacted, and consequently, the effectiveness of its results.

Thus, incorporating the political apology within our understanding of the Canadian public policy process highlights the transformative potential for both parties: where the political apology expands our understanding of the modern tools of governance, so too, do the theories of public policy contribute to our understanding of the political apology. These critical engagements offer opportunities to build the normative precepts necessary for more meaningful expressions of regret and apology, more thoughtful and reflexive relationships to our past, and perhaps most importantly, forgiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> The double entendre suggested in the use of the latin term *apologia*, here, is important, both literally, given the apology's critics, sardonically and cynically. Whereas apologies are offered without excuse, *apologia* references a defense of one's actions, somewhat undercutting the power and intent of regret.

<sup>2</sup> Occurring in 1914, the *Komagata Maru* incident refers to the refusal of Canadian officials to allow a Hong Kong vessel carrying South Asian (largely Punjabi) immigrants from docking in Canada. Seeking to challenge Canada's exclusionary immigration policies, almost all of the 376 British subjects aboard the vessel were refused entry to Canada and forced to return to India, where 19 were killed upon disembarking from the vessel and others were imprisoned (See Simon Fraser University Library. "Komagata Maru: Continuing the Journey." <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/> (accessed on 8 March 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Implicit in this definition is the idea that political apologies are delivered by political officials for historical wrongs affected by the state. For the purpose of this paper, political apologies are not understood as apologies delivered by political apologies for interpersonal errors. To that end, this paper examines Tachuvis' concept of many-to-many apologies, that is collective apologies, offered to collective entities, i.e. the state offering an apology to an offended party (1991: 99). According to Tachuvis, these collective entities can be understood as "social inventions or creations. In other words, they are artificial and intangible bodies formally founded and sustained by human purposes, efforts and discourse but with an independent existence, history and identity as defined by custom or law. Such entities may survive beyond the lives of their members" as is seen with apologies for historical wrongs such as the *Komagata Maru* incident (1991: 99).

<sup>4</sup> The term futurology draws on the work of Denis Saint-Martin, who claims that Canada's social investment approach hinges on futurist notions of investment. According to Saint-Martin, we invest to "[sow] seeds...it is something...that ones in the present in hopes of a positive future return" (Saint-Martin, 2007: 285-286). Building upon Saint-Martin's conception of futurology, one could argue that the political apology is delivered in an effort to "invest...in a positive future."

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note, however, that like procedural instruments, a part of the apology's schismic gaze is fixed inward – the apology does seek to acknowledge and rectify past state action. But unlike procedural instruments, this attempt at change does not come through alterations to policy processes. Instead, it comes more broadly through forgiveness and transformative conceptions of our national identity.

<sup>6</sup> A BC liberal plan, leaked on February 27, 2013, outlines a multicultural outreach plan intended to re-engage ethnic voters and media. Under component three of the plan, entitled "quick wins," the government intends to "build goodwill and political capital with target communities through simply and thoughtful actions to show ongoing care and concerns" through required actions, including "identi[fy]ing and correct[ing] 'historical wrongs through actions such as the *Komagata Maru* apology in the house" (BC Government, "Multicultural Strategic Outreach Plan." January 2012.

<sup>7</sup> While the political apology's transformative power makes it more than symbolic, one could argue that that because their enactments are being undertaken in an era of legislation with the express mandate of removing legal liability from apologetic equations,<sup>7</sup> they are rendered meaningless. While the legal safeguarding of apologies may eliminate opportunities for legal

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proceedings, particularly civil litigation, authors have pointed the importance of other forms of justice, namely restorative justice which focuses on the needs of victims and offenders, over abstract principles of justice which have at the core the principle of punishment. It should be noted that at present, Canada and a number of provincial jurisdictions, including Manitoba, have enacted apology legislation. While the depth and breadth of this legislation differs between jurisdictions, it generally attempts to partially protect apologies made by health practitioners, and in some cases any person. This legislation usually involves amendments to evidence admissibility laws, to preclude the submission of any evidence related to an apology as part of a legal proceedings. For additional information, see Zylberman's "Apology Legislation: Should it be Safe to Apologize in Manitoba? An Assessment of Bill 202."

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