

# Interactive Discourse Features Supporting Aversive and Existential Acknowledgment In Legislative and Ceremonial Government Apologies

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This study identifies and compares two sub-genres of collective government apologies for historical wrongs: legislative and ceremonial. The analysis focuses on discourse features related to interactivity, such as use of pronouns, direct address, and orientation to difference. It finds legislative apologies suppress interactivity while ceremonial apologies are highly interactive, suggesting that the former foreground aversive acknowledgement of the wrongs committed while the latter emphasize existential acknowledgment of the victims.

Keywords: collective apology, acknowledgment, legal language, political discourse, interactional discourse

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last three decades have seen the growing practice of governments apologizing for historical wrongs, most often in the form of ceremonial speeches by leaders. Thus, studies of collective apologies have focused on ceremonial speeches. However, at times, a government may offer an apology through a congressional resolution or law—what I call “legislative apologies”. This paper seeks to expand our understanding of collective apology by offering an initial investigation into distinguishing the sub-genres of legislative and ceremonial apologies. Specifically, it presents a rhetorical and discourse analysis of two U.S. acts of legislation: Public Law 103-150 (PL 103-150) passed in 1993, apologizing to Native Hawaiians for the annexation of Hawaii and Senate Joint Resolution 14 (S.J. Res. 14) of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress passed in 2009, apologizing to Native Americans for past government discriminatory practices. Two ceremonial apologies are employed for comparison: President Clinton’s 1997 apology to victims of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s 2008 “Apology to the Stolen Generations,” addressing Australia’s Indigenous peoples. The apology to Native Hawaiians and to the victims of the Tuskegee Syphilis study were both

issued by or under President Clinton while the apology to Native Americans and to the Stolen generations addressed similar historical injustices.

The analysis finds that the two sub-genres of apologies have dramatically different discourse features impacting their interactional dimension—the degree to which “the presence and nature of the source and the recipients” are made visible (Fahnestock, 2011, p. 278). The legislative apologies suppress this dimension through a highly impersonal tone and collective voice typical of legal language, conveyed through the use of third person pronouns and the absence of naming or addressing individuals. Interactivity can also be demonstrated through an “orientation to difference,” Fairclough’s term referring to the degree to which a text recognizes and addresses possible differences of attitudes or positions of the audiences (2003, p. 41). Such orientation is absent in the legislative apologies. Instead, the debated histories surrounding the injustices are presented as uncontested facts. Further, victims’ expectations appear to be overlooked in the notably brief and restrain statements of mortification and the explicit disclaimers for corrective action. In contrast, the ceremonial apologies are highly interactive texts, with speakers taking on very personal stances toward specific audiences and their concerns. The interactivity and orientation toward victims are established through first-person pronouns, direct address, naming, repeated and emphatic mortification, and explicit corrective action.

These generic and linguistic differences of legislative and ceremonial apologies suggest different functions. That is, while both acknowledge historical wrongs and apologize to victims, they each foreground different aspects of apology: legislative apologies emphasize the historical facts warranting the apology and ceremonial apologies focus more on the victims and repairing relationships. These different functions reflect distinct forms of acknowledgement identified by Trudy Govier (2006): aversive and existential. Aversive acknowledgment recognizes that the “acts in question were wrong” and “those charged with committing them did in fact do so” (Govier, 2006, p. 48) while existential acknowledgment recognizes that “the persons harmed possess human worth and dignity and merit full and equal human rights...” (Govier, 2006, p. 48). Govier points out that the two types of acknowledgments are closely related, but are distinct and can have distinct effects.

Most studies of collective political apologies have investigated cases to help establish typologies of strategies and purposes to define the genre broadly. This paper extends that work by investigating relevant sub-genres, recognizing that collective apologies can take different forms. I argue that legislative collective apologies function more as aversive acknowledgment, due to their lack of interactivity and focus on historical facts, while ceremonial collective apologies foreground existential

acknowledgment with their highly interactive and personal stance. Thus, this analysis of legislative and ceremonial apologies encourages a more nuanced understanding of collective apologies for historical wrongs, one that recognizes that the specific sub-genre can significantly affect the apologetic function. This paper first discusses apology in general and collective apology more specifically, second, it reviews the contexts of each studied apology, third, it highlights the varying discourse features between ceremonial and legislative apologies, relating these variations to the kinds of acknowledgement they perform.

## 2. APOLOGY

At the interpersonal level, Goffman has described apology as a remedial action, a form of corrective action when some social norm has been violated and the offender reassures the offended that they understand the norm and recommits themselves to it (1971, p. 113). Lazare has defined apology as “an encounter between two parties in which one party, the offender, acknowledges responsibility for an offense or grievance and expresses regret or remorse to a second party, the aggrieved” (2004, p. 23). In the public arena, the idea of “image repair” has dominated the scholarship, which draws heavily from the work of Ware and Linkugel (1973) and William Benoit (2014). Image repair focuses on specific strategies, such as bolstering or shifting blame, individuals use to reinstate their reputations.<sup>1</sup> In addition to image repair strategies, scholars have noted that the performative nature of the public apology, usually televised and distributed via mass media, is itself a kind of penance, a *metanoia* (Ellwanger, 2012)—a performance of mortification—required for image repair. Others have discussed the role of cultural traditions in apologetic practices—that leaders draw on cultural resources, such as dominant cultural narratives, in justifying, explaining, or repudiating their actions (Jackson, 2012; Liebersohn, Neuman, and Bekerman, 2004; Suzuki and van Eemeren, 2004).

When governments apologize for historical wrongs, the focus turns from individual image repair to relationship repair among communities: “collective apologies seek to reconstitute, rebuild, and strengthen relationships amongst communities harmed by historical wrongdoing perpetrated by one community against another” (Edwards 2011, p. 75). They do so through acting “as a mediation on past, present, and future relationships with the victimized collective.” (Edwards, 2011, p. 75). These apologies often reinterpret history with an eye to affirming shared values, (Villadesen, 2008). They repudiate acts once justified by

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<sup>1</sup> See Kampf’s work (2009) on how strategies for image repair can lead to public non-apologies.

the government, reframing them as morally reprehensible and often provide assurances that such acts will not be repeated.

Whether addressing individual or collect apology, much of the scholarship has revolved around what constitutes an acceptable apology. Many theorists deem acknowledgment of the wrong the most important aspect of any apology. As Lazare notes, “without such a foundation, the apology process cannot even begin” (2004, p. 75). Govier’s work, likewise has argued for the fundamental importance of acknowledgment, particularly in efforts at national reconciliation. She defines acknowledgement in the collective context as

those responsible for committing such wrongs to recognize and admit having done so, and to articulate or represent that admission in a public form so that it becomes an enduring part of the public history of the state and society. The public admission and expression amount to acknowledgment. (2006, p. 48)

Acknowledgement is the opposite of denial and implies that the wrong actions will not be recommitted (Govier, 2006, p. 15). However, acknowledgment must be detailed and specific. Perpetrators or their representatives can be tempted to be vague in describing the transgression (Negash, 2006, pp. 9-10). Thus, “truth telling” and “being transparent about the facts” is essential (Negash, 2006, p. 9). Specific acknowledgment should also recognize the consequences of the wrongs done, particularly to effects on victims. This latter function recognizes the victims’ innocence and humanity, reflecting a new way of treating them. A full acknowledgment, then, would detail the wrongs done and their effects on victims, thereby including what Govier termed as aversive and existential acknowledgment.

In addition to acknowledgement, mortification and corrective action are usually necessary for an acceptable apology. Through mortification, the offender accepts responsibility and expresses remorse. It is typically signaled through an explicit Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) such as the words “sorry” or “apologize” (Augoustinos, Hastie, and Wright, 2011, p. 509) when paired with an accurate portrayal of the transgression. Finally, corrective action entails addressing the source of the injury (Benoit, 2014, p.26) so as to prevent reoccurrences (Edwards, 2010, p. 69). Though distinct from compensation, corrective action might also include some payment or measures to remedy the negative consequences of the transgression and a commitment to prevent future offenses and to repair the damage done by the offense.

The legislative and ceremonial apologies examined here both contain aversive and existential acknowledgment. However, their discourse features suggest that they each foreground one type of

acknowledgment more than the other. Also, legislative apologies omit corrective action while ceremonial apologies take pains to detail specific plans for corrective action.

### 3. CASES

The four apologies examined address historical wrongs perpetrated by governments or their representatives over years and even decades with damaging consequences lingering until today. Prior to 1893, Hawaii was an independent kingdom with a monarch, recognized by other national governments, including the United States, with whom it had diplomatic and trade agreements. In 1893, Hawaii was overthrown by U.S. and other agents, though not at the direction of the U.S. government. In 1898, the United States congress officially annexed Hawaii through the Newland Resolution. It became a state in 1959 through a referendum. PL 103-150, was sponsored by Democratic Senators Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye from Hawaii. After passing both Senate and House as a joint resolution, it was signed by President Clinton into law on November 23, 1993 during a White House ceremony. While the Hawaiian congressional delegation was pleased, and Hawaiians celebrated, there is still debate as to the historical accuracy of the law, as well as its impact on the Hawaiian sovereignty movement which is ongoing (Lopez-Reyes, 2000).

On April 30, 2009, the US Senate passed a joint resolution to “acknowledge a long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal government regarding Indian Tribes and to offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States”(S.J. Res. 14). It was sponsored by Senator Brownback and others, first going through the Committee on Indian Affairs before being presented to the Senate for a vote and passed. However, only a small piece of this legislation was included in a defense spending bill and signed into Public Law 11-203 by President Obama. The apology and signing were not publicly announced or accompanied by a ceremony. Due to this lack of publicity, most Native Americans were unaware that this apology had taken place (Longley, 2019; McKinnon 2009).

The two ceremonial apologies considered here are President Bill Clinton’s 1997 apology for the Tuskegee Experiment and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s 2008 apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples.<sup>2</sup> The Tuskegee Experiment was a program sponsored by the United States Public Health Service and the Tuskegee Institute in Macon County, Alabama in the 1930s into the 1970s to treat African American men with

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards, J. (2010) analyses Clinton and Rudd’s apologies for purpose and rhetorical strategies to establish genre features of collective apologies. Harter, L., Stephens, R.J. and Japp, P.M. (2000) examine the narrative strategies in Clinton’s apology.

syphilis. Under the guise of treatment, but without participants knowledge or consent, doctors left the disease untreated to study its progression. Even after effective treatment with penicillin was widely available, they did not treat the participants, essentially using them as unknowing guinea pigs. The study lasted 40 years, until 1972. In 1973 Congressional hearings found the experiment deeply unethical. Victims and their families won a \$10 million law suit and the U.S. government set up the Tuskegee Health Benefits Program to provide medical and support services to victims and their families. On May 16, 1997, President Clinton apologized through a speech at a White House ceremony during which other government officials and survivors of the study also spoke. Survivors and families of victims were present. Survivors who spoke at the ceremony thanked the president for his apology<sup>3</sup>.

In one of his first acts as Labor Prime Minister, Rudd, on behalf of Parliament, apologized to Australia's Indigenous Peoples for decades of discriminatory and oppressive policies. His lengthy apology, given before Parliament and televised, contained a condensed version—a motion that was then passed by Parliament. His speech received a standing ovation in the parliament and generally positive coverage in the press (Augoustinos, Hastie, and Wright, 2011). However, the issue of apologizing had been the topic of public debate with the previous ruling Liberal party opposed such an act (Davidson, 2014).

#### 4. LEGISLATIVE APOLOGIES AS AVERSIVE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The legislative apologies are bound by legal genre conventions, including an impersonal style and formality. The formality comes from the legal written tradition of British law (Williams, 2005, p. 30), and helps to signal that the law has been through a process of negotiation and careful, considered construction and its contents are no longer preliminary (Stinchcombe 2001, p. 9). The impersonal style also supports the authoritativeness and archival nature of law—reflecting an impartial and collective stance that endures beyond any particular person, political administration, or social-historical context. Also, the author and audience are both collective entities leading to the impersonal style. Thus, the language of legislative texts represses features signaling their interactive dimension. Instead, the texts foreground the historical events warranting the apology. The majority of the legislation is spent chronicling the events, laying out the facts of the case in the highly formal, authoritative

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<sup>3</sup> The current U.S. Center for Disease Control website offers a detailed overview of the Tuskegee Experiment and compensation efforts, as well as the transcript of the presidential apology (Tuskegee Study and Health Benefits Program, 2019). Video of the White House ceremony, including victim speeches, are available (*Apology to Survivors*, 1997).

style. These features point to a more aversive acknowledgment of the wrongs done.

#### 4.1 *Legal Language: Impersonal Style*

One of the ways of making a text personal or interactive is through the use of pronouns, specifically the first person “I,” “we,” “us,” “our” and the second person “you.” Thus, the impersonal style of the legislative apologies is most obviously reflected through the almost complete use of the third person throughout, never referring directly to a specific speaker or audience. First person and second person pronouns are absent.<sup>4</sup> Despite PL 103-150 being sponsored by Senator Daniel Akaka and signed into law by President Clinton, and S.J. Res. 14, being sponsored by Senator Brownback, any reference to or voice of these individuals is absent from the texts. Instead, the actors in the text are “the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress...” (THE APOLOGY, 1993) and “The United States, acting through Congress...” (S.J. Res. 14, 2009).<sup>5</sup> Such language suggests that the apologies are not contingent of individual politicians or historical circumstances and are backed by the U.S. government.

Also, the victims, to whom apologies are directed, are referred to by collective nouns, rather than named more specifically, reinforcing the impersonal style. In his discussion of representing social actors, Fairclough states, “The opposite extreme to impersonalization is naming—representing individuals by name” (2003, p. 150). Fahnestock notes that “the first method of bringing participants into a text is by referring or naming” (2011, p. 303). The legislative apologies avoid such individual naming, relying on simply “Native Hawaiians” and “Native Peoples” or “Indian tribes.” More specific groups, such as the many distinct Native American tribes, or individuals or populations, such as children, who were victims are not identified. One exception exists in PL 103-150 in which the Preamble chronicles the mistreatment of Queen Liliuokalani who ruled Hawaii at the time of annexation. However, this naming is provided in the context of providing historical background; thus, she is not spoken *to*, but rather *about*.

#### 4.2 *Legal Language: Orientation to Difference*

In addition to the use of third person, the legislative apologies’ low interactivity is demonstrated by their ignoring possible counter perspectives and audience stances. When discussing orientation to

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<sup>4</sup> With one exception in S.J. Res. 14 where the text refers to the “...land we share;”

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the paper, excerpts of PL 103-150 are taken from THE APOLOGY, 1993; excerpts of S.J. Res. 14 are taken from S.J. Res. 14, 2009.

difference, Fairclough differentiates various levels of orientation, from highly oriented and embracing difference, to ignoring difference. (2003, pp.41-42). In the mid-range level, a speaker may try to “resolve or overcome difference” or “focus on commonality” (2003, p. 42). Making definitive pronouncements in law suppresses counter perspectives. This lack of orientation to difference is first demonstrated by the portrayal of the transgressions in the Preambles. The history surrounding historical injustices are often ignored and if not, then highly contested, but the legislative apologies elide these issues in their representations. The lack of dialogism is further demonstrated by the brief and restrained mortification and the explicit disclaimer, denying corrective action, which overlooks victims’ needs.

These apologies follow the structure of typical statutes, beginning with a Preamble before moving on to the Resolutions containing the apology and other performatives. The Preamble “sets out the context in which the text was drawn up and what the purpose and scope of the law...is meant to be”(Williams, 2005, p. 39). Preambles can be long, using a series of “citations” beginning with a “whereas clause,” often separated by semicolons to form a single sentence. In the legislative apologies, the Preambles represent the transgressions warranting the apologies. These statements elide the contested history by using unmodalized language and never acknowledging counter histories; the statements are presented categorically as statements of fact, with no hedging or qualifiers. PL 103-150 begins with the following “whereas” statement and continues with 34 more:

*Whereas*, prior to the arrival of the first Europeans in 1778, the Native Hawaiian people lived in a highly organized, self-sufficient, subsistent social system based on communal land tenure with a sophisticated language, culture, and religion;

*Whereas*, a unified monarchical government of the Hawaiian Islands was established in 1810 under Kamehameha I, the first King of Hawaii;

*Whereas*, from 1826 until 1893, the United States recognized the independence of the Kingdom of Hawaii, extended full and complete diplomatic recognition to the Hawaiian Government, and entered into treaties and conventions with the Hawaiian monarchs to govern commerce and navigation in 1826, 1842, 1849, and 1887;

S.J. Res. 14’s Preamble is structurally and linguistically similar, with 20 “whereas” statements.

In the legislative apologies the Preambles dominate the texts. In PL 103-150, the Preamble makes up 83% of the words of the legislation,



while in S.J. Res. 14, it makes up 69%. Thus, the laws provide more “presence” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 115-120) to detailing the events, and do so with specific dates, locations, actors, etc. As noted earlier, apologies for historical wrongs become part of the story of these injustices and the efforts at reconciliation—they become part of a nation’s history. By apologizing through law, with the authoritative, collective voice these acts offer a singular sanctioned view of history. Thus, while the legislative apologies take pains to acknowledge the historical wrongs, they do so by silencing contesting voices.

A lack of orientation to difference also exists in the legislations’ mortification and disclaimers, which appear in the Resolutions following the Preambles. While acknowledgment is a necessary condition for apology, mortification, as the acceptance of responsibility and expression of remorse, is the heart of apology. Given the extent of the historical wrongs—the vast numbers of peoples affected, the decades of harm done to them, and the long-term consequences—the mortifications in the legislative apologies are quite restrained. PL 103-150 states,

The Congress...(1) Apologizes to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the people of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii on January 17, 1983 with the participation of agents and citizens of the United States, and the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination;

S.J. Res. 14’s apology is equally brief:

The United States, acting through Congress...apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States.

While the acknowledgment of wrongs in the Preambles is long and detailed, the mortification is notably singular and brief. Such brief expressions of mortification almost seem almost anticlimactic after pages detailing decades of mistreatment. Thus, while the mortification is present and explicit, (with the IFD “apologizes”), its brevity signals a lack of orientation to difference. After generations of suffering and being ignored, victims of such crimes may need a more extensive and emphatic mortification to be persuaded that the apology is sincere and the wrongs will not be repeated.

Finally, successful apologies often contain promises of corrective action—that the perpetrator will take concrete action to prevent offending again and will make efforts to mitigate the harm done, perhaps through some compensation. Such promises reassure victims that the perpetrators have changed and the apology is sincere. The legislative

apologies are decidedly ungenerous in this regard. They make gestures toward corrective action, but avoid committing to any specific action. PL 103-150 “commend[s] efforts at reconciliation” and “expresses its commitment to acknowledge the ramifications of the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii...”. S.J. Res. 14 “expresses its commitment to build on the positive relationships of the past and present to move toward a brighter future...”. However, these statements are quite general, with no specific corrective action. Further, each legislative apology ends with a Disclaimer preventing victims from seeking compensation based on the apologies. For example, S.J. Res. 14 states, “Nothing in this Joint Resolution (1) authorizes or supports any claim against the United States; or (2) serves as a settlement of any claim against the United States”. The lack of discernable corrective action, and explicit ban on seeking such action ignore victims’ desire for reparations and changed behavior.

Overall, the legislative apologies lack orientation to difference—they do not recognize any possible counter positions in their portrayals of history and present that history a categorical truth; the restrained, brief statements of mortification and lack of corrective action overlooks victims’ desires for reassurance or their possible skepticism that the apology is sincere and that similar wrongs will not reoccur.

This lack of orientation to difference, together with the formal, impersonal language indicates a text with little interaction between speaker and audience. Instead, the texts, as legislation, speak for the record, establishing an authoritative and timeless written catalogue of the historical events warranting the apologies and they archivally record the act of apology itself. Thus, the analysis suggests that the legislative apologies serve more as aversive acknowledgement of the wrong rather than existential acknowledgment of the victims, though the latter is present.

## 5. CEREMONIAL APOLOGIES AS EXISTENTIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In contrast to the legislative apologies, the ceremonial apologies are marked by highly interactive discourse. This textual addressivity is accomplished through the frequent use of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, directly naming and addressing audience members, and a high degree of orientation to difference.

### *5.1 Ceremonial Language: Personal Interaction*

While the legislative apologies avoided 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, Clinton and Rudd use these throughout their speeches, particularly when expressing mortification. When Clinton describes the transgressions and apologizes, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns create a personal stance and address the audience:

It is a time when *our* nation failed to live up to its ideals, when *our* nation broke the trust with *our* people that is the very foundation of *our* democracy...*we* can make amends and repair our nation.

...what the United States government did was shameful, and *I* am sorry.

The American people are sorry—for the loss, for the years of hurt. *You* did nothing wrong, but *you* were grievously wronged. *I* apologize and *I* am sorry that this apology has been so long in coming.

...to the doctors who have been wrongly associated with the events there, *you* have *our* apology as well. To our African American citizens, *I* am sorry that *your* federal government orchestrated a study so clearly racist. (Tuskegee Study- Presidential Apology, 1997; emphasis added)

Rudd's apology is similarly personal and even more emphatic:

...the laws that *our* parliaments enacted made the stolen generations possible. *We*, the parliaments of the nation, are ultimately responsible,...

*We* apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments...

*We* apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children...

For the pain, suffering and hurt...*we* say sorry.

To the mothers and fathers, the brothers and sisters...*we* say sorry.

For the indignity and degradation...*we* say sorry.

To the stolen generations, *I* say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, *I* am sorry. On behalf of the government of Australia, *I* am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, *I* am sorry. *I* offer this apology without qualification. *We* apologise for the hurt, the pain and suffering...*We* apologize for the indignity...*We* offer this apology to the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, the sisters...(Rudd, 2008; emphasis added)

Opponents of collective apologies argue that current individuals and generations bear no responsibility for past wrongs. With their use of personal pronouns, Clinton and Rudd reject this distancing of past and present responsibilities. Instead, the responsibility remains with the collective entity, which they and their colleagues and fellow citizens

constitute. Also, although they are apologizing as government representatives, they take an individual stance that is absent in legislative apologies.

The excerpts above also illustrate ways in which Clinton and Rudd directly address various audience members. Clinton notes the doctors caught up in the scandal, as well as the African American victims, and Rudd differentiates family members torn apart—mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and children. They name and directly address other members of the audience as well. In his opening remarks, Clinton speaks directly to the members of the audience:

I would like to recognize the other survivors who are here today and their families: Mr. Charlie Pollard is here. Mr. Carter Howard. (Applause.) Mr. Fred Simmons. Mr. Simmons just took his first airplane ride, and he reckons he's about 110 years old, so I think it's time for him to take a chance or two. I'm glad he did. And Mr. Frederick Moss, thank you, sir. (Tuskegee Study-Presidential Apology, 1997)

He also names congressional leaders present and thanks them for their roles in addressing the Tuskegee experiment and the needs of the survivors and their families. Rudd also names various members of the audience: He directly addresses the various groups that were victimized:

... I would also like to speak personally to the members of the stolen generations and their families: to those here today, so many of you; to those listening across the nation—from Yuendumu, in the central west of the Northern Territory, to Yabara, in North Queensland, and to Pitjantjatjara in South Australia. I know that, in offering this apology on behalf of the government and the parliament, there is nothing I can say today that can take away the pain you have suffered personally. (Rudd, 2008)

Through these techniques, Clinton and Rudd make their speeches highly personal and interactive, recognizing their various audiences and speaking directly to them.

## *5.2 Ceremonial apology: Orientation to difference*

Clinton and Rudd signal a high orientation to difference in several ways. First, they are attuned to the victims' need for believable and sincere mortification. As noted earlier, the wrongs being addressed were perpetrated over years and generations of victims. Thus, victims might easily expect or need a forceful "sorry" statement. As seen in the above excerpts, both Clinton and Rudd use IFIDs repeatedly, using "sorry" and "apologize" repeatedly. Of course, repetition is a classic stylistic feature of speeches to provide rhythm and coherence, but it also can serve as a

means of conceptual amplification. Fahnestock points out that “To amplify an element means to endow it with stylistic prominence so that it acquires conceptual importance in the discourse and salience in the minds of audience” (2011, p. 390). Given the severity and extent of the wrongs done, the repeated and emphatic expressions of remorse are more than justified and demonstrate recognition of victims’ needs.

Yet, no matter how emphatic a verbal apology, in the case of historical injustices, it is not enough to right the wrongs. From the victims’ perspective, compared to the injustices they suffered, mere words are inadequate. Because of this inadequacy, victims may not necessarily forgive the perpetrators. Clinton and Rudd recognize their apologies’ inadequacy in the eyes of their audiences. Clinton states,

To the survivors, to the wives and family members, the children and the grandchildren, I say what you know: No power on Earth can give you back the lives lost, the pain suffered, the years of internal torment and anguish. What was done cannot be undone...

But you have the power, for only you — Mr. Shaw, the others who are here, the family members who are with us in Tuskegee — only you have the power to forgive. Your presence here shows us that you have chosen a better path than your government did so long ago. (Tuskegee Study-Presidential Apology, 1997)

Rudd makes a similar appeal for forgiveness:

I know that, in offering this apology on behalf of the government and the parliament, there is nothing I can say today that can take away the pain you have suffered personally. Whatever words I speak today, I cannot undo that. Words alone are not that powerful; grief is a very personal thing.

My proposal is this: if the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it is offered, we can today resolve together that there be a new beginning for Australia. (Rudd, 2008)

By requesting that the victims accept the apology, rather than expecting it, Clinton and Rudd recognize that their audiences may view the apology as woefully inadequate compared to the harmful effects they suffered. By empowering the victims to accept or deny the apology, these discourse moves signal “a new way of treating the victim, which itself reverses a prior way of mistreating the victim that began with the initial wrongdoing” (Helmreich, 2015, p. 76).

Finally, successful apologies usually require corrective action—a tangible demonstration of the remorse and a sign to the victims that the offender will not reoffend. While the legislative apologies encouraged or supported “efforts at reconciliation,” they did not specify any corrective action and actively prevented claims in their disclaimers. The ceremonial apologies, in contrast, contained specific commitments to corrective action. In addition to the compensation already given by Congress, Clinton lists five initiatives including a grant to establish a bioethics research and training center and directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services, together with higher education to develop training materials for researchers on bioethics. Rudd, likewise proposes initiatives to help victims, such as having every Indigenous child attend early education schools, all Indigenous children having access to health care, and forming a joint commission to ensure adequate housing for remote communities. With these commitments to corrective action, Clinton and Rudd, recognize the expectations of the victims for some concrete acts that demonstrate a commitment to not reoffending. Overall, the ceremonial apologies are highly interactive in significant contrast to legislative apologies. This stance signals more attention to the victims and their needs, foregrounding existential acknowledgement.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Studies of collective apology for historical wrongs have sought to understand the genre broadly defined. They have productively identified shared purposes, functions, and characteristics. However, collective apologies can take different forms such as legislation or ceremonial speeches. These sub-genres, not surprisingly, reflect drastically different discourse features. The analysis suggests that the contrasting interactive dimension of these sub-genres can have different effects on the type of acknowledgment foregrounded.

PL 103-150 and S.J. Res. 14 follow the genre constraints of U.S. legislation with an impersonal, objective style, and authoritative stance while Clinton and Rudd’s apologies reflect personal and performative qualities, oriented to their audiences. Legislation is supposed to transcend individual politicians or political moments and establish guiding principles by which to govern. Thus, the legislative apologies suppress interaction with the audience, instead focusing on chronicling the wrongs committed to establish an uncontested record of historical fact. In doing so, they perform aversive acknowledgement. In contrast, in the ceremonial apologies the speakers take highly personal, interactive stances and are attuned to audience expectations and needs. They foreground the victim, treating them with the respect and deference previously lacking, thereby enacting existential acknowledgement.

These findings encourage a more nuanced understanding of collective apology, with attention to ways in which governments choose to apologize to victims. At the same time, these cases raise questions about apology dissemination and reception: legislative apologies may or may not be publicized, while ceremonial apologies are typically mass media events. Surely, the degree of dissemination would likely influence efforts at reconciliation. Finally, research into how victims receive either type of apology would be productive to evaluate the effectiveness of the two sub-genres of collective apology.

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