Colin Powell's 2000 keynote address: Compassionate conservatism in an age of cynicism

Kehrin Kercher Thomas
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/1701

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
COLIN POWELL'S 2000 KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM
IN AN AGE OF CYNICISM

by

Kehrin Kercher Thomas

Bachelor of Science
Montana State University-Bozeman
1993

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2004
INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.
The Thesis prepared by

Kehrin Kercher Thomas

Entitled

Colin Powell's 2000 Keynote Address: Compassionate Conservatism in an Age of Cynicism

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Colin Powell’s 2000 Keynote Address:
Compassionate Conservatism
in an Age of Cynicism

by

Kehrin Kercher Thomas

Dr. David Henry, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Colin Powell faced significant rhetorical challenges when he delivered his keynote address at the 2000 Republican National Convention, including the existing political atmosphere and public sentiment, the political implications of a Republican victory, the influence of technology on campaign rhetoric, and audience attitude toward him. Despite rhetorical identification as a significant part of our national conversation and one of the few convention events receiving significant media coverage, little analysis has been generated on the keynote address. This study attempts to fill a gap and influence future research on a communicative act that has undergone, and may continue to undergo, significant changes. Bitzer’s notion of rhetorical situation is the underlying theory guiding this study. Within the context of the 2000 presidential campaign, the constituents of exigence, audience, and constraints are defined. Those key to General Powell’s keynote address are identified.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT............................................................................................................................. iii  

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................... 1  
Review of Related Literature ............................................................................................. 7

CHAPTER 2 COLIN L. POWELL: THE GENERAL, THE ORATOR ............. 24  
Powell’s Rhetorical Style ................................................................................................. 34

CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION .......... 38  
The Rhetorical Situation .................................................................................................. 47  
The Republican Platform ................................................................................................. 56

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS ............................... 61  
Values and the American Value System ......................................................................... 62

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION ......................................................................................... 82

WORKS CITED ............................................................................................................... 86

APPENDIX  
Transcript of Speech Used for Analysis ....................................................................... 97

VITA...................................................................................................................................... 105

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On Monday, July 31, 2000, the son of immigrants—a career Army man and celebrated military leader—prepared to deliver a speech to the delegates at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Retired General Colin Powell was not new to this situation; four years prior, he addressed the convention in San Diego, California. However, in contrast to 1996, Powell was honored by being the Convention's keynote speaker. The keynote address has long been a part of political conventions, and over time has become a highly scripted and predictable rhetorical event. Thus, by 2000, delegates in attendance, the political analysts, the media, the television audience, and those connected via the Internet knew with some level of certainty what was to come. Powell would shame the incumbent President and Democratic Party on policy and the state of the nation. He would praise the Republican Party, the Party's presidential candidate, and the Republican platform. However, the discourse1 Powell produced did not match these expectations. His speech did not contain all the generic elements audiences have come to expect, which may have surprised some, but was a welcome change for others.

In Why Americans Hate Politics, E. J. Dionne, Jr. argues that “we are suffering from a false polarization in our politics, in which liberals and conservatives keep arguing about

1 In this thesis, the term discourse refers to written and/or spoken public communication.
the same things when the country wants to move on” (11). The same issues tend to resurface in each campaign as the current state of politics maintains a perpetual cycle of one party blaming the other for the ills of society and little being done to solve those ills.

I argue that the discourse delivered by Retired Army General Colin Powell at the 2000 Republican National Convention\(^2\) is worthy of study because of its ability to add to our understanding of communication. To do so, I will consider the speech in relation to political communication studies, as well as to the concept of rhetorical situation.

As a field, political communication influences several disciplines. According to Denton, departments of “communication, mass communication, journalism, political science, and sociology” produce “rhetorical analysis, propaganda analysis, attitude change studies, [and] voting studies.” As Denton continues, they are concerned with “the presidency, political polls, public opinion, debates, and advertising” (“Series Forward” 2002 x). Every four years, political scientists, politicians, social scientists and journalists scramble to understand “why the presidential race turned out as it did”—to the point that “political campaigns in the United States are probably overstudied” (Hart 16). Hart asks whether there is anything left to learn. His answer is yes, but only if we assume that what is said during a campaign matters; however, this “is not a common assumption” (16). Bruce Gronbeck notes: “Whether oral or written, face-to-face or electronically mediated, verbal acts pervade campaigns and provide the largest pile of grist for scholarly mills” (276). Despite the importance of political communication, some aspects, namely the keynote address, do not receive enough attention from communication scholars.

\(^2\) The transcript of Powell’s speech used in this analysis is attached as an appendix. The text was accessed from an electronic database and was cross-checked with a video recording of the Republican National Convention to ensure completeness and accuracy.
Some literature is devoted to the examination of the keynote address (Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 2000; Henry 1988; Miles 1960; Murphy and Burkholder 2003; C. Smith 1975). But compared to other genres within political communication, the number of books and articles devoted to this topic pales. Some research occurred early in the television era, but focused on speeches delivered prior to the inclusion of a television audience. Much of this material is dated and difficult to access. Though rich with rhetorical value, this scholarship fails to reflect the influences the technological age and the changing political atmosphere have on discourse. Other research focuses on the specific rhetorical act and its link to the generic expectations of the political convention keynote address. One such example is the critique of Mario Cuomo’s 1984 keynote address offered by David Henry. This article employs, in part, Lloyd Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation to argue that “the keynote setting itself posed a significant problem” (107). Henry concludes that Cuomo had to “formulate a message appealing at once to two audiences, both of which required special treatment” (109). One audience was Middle America, which was “generally supportive of the president,” and the other was the Democratic delegation that “expected anti-administration commentary” (109).

Colin Powell also faced significant problems related to multiple audiences when he delivered his keynote address including the political atmosphere and public sentiment that existed during the 2000 election campaign, political implications of a Republican victory in 2000, the influence of technology, and audience attitude toward him. Despite being identified as a significant part of our national conversation (Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 2000; Blankenship, Robson, and Williams; Hart), and one of the few convention events that continues to receive significant media coverage, little analysis is offered.
regarding the keynote address at national party conventions. This study attempts to fill that gap and influence future research on a communicative act that has undergone, and may continue to undergo, significant changes.

A second reason this discourse deserves attention is that in the immediacy of the campaign, General Powell functioned as a valuable asset to his party. Powell’s prominence as a political leader makes his discourse valuable to communication studies as well. He is a successful black American, the son of Jamaican immigrants, well known, and respected for his military leadership. He potentially stimulates support for the Republican Party from the moderate, independent, or swing voter. His popularity in varied public sectors increases his chance to become the first black American to hold either the office of vice-president or president. Having such a prominent member is quite a coup for the Republican Party considering black America’s dominant affiliation with the Democratic Party.

Powell is not ignored in literature, but he occupies only a paragraph or a page in numerous political texts or texts on the Persian Gulf and Iraq wars. Political scientist Tracy D. Snipe includes Powell in his examination of “the contributions of African American males to government and politics during the latter half of the twentieth century” (10). Powell is part of a recently completed dissertation examining the autobiographies of three male black Americans (Roach). Richard Leeman includes Powell in his examination of African-American orators noting the significant influence of African-American oratory on American History (xvi). Chapter 2 of this thesis adds to our knowledge of Colin Powell by outlining his life and career. Such an involved detailing is necessary to establish Powell’s role and significance in the rhetorical situation.
generated by the 2000 keynote address. According to Lloyd Bitzer, the speaker is an important part of the rhetorical situation. He argues that “when the orator enters the situation, his [sic] discourse not only harnesses constraints given by situation but provides additional important constraints—for example his [sic] personal character, his logical proofs, and his style” (1968 8). Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of Powell’s rhetoric and oratorical style.

A third reason for this examination is the content of the discourse Powell produced. For the optimist, Powell’s unconventional content and form represents willingness by Republicans to acknowledge and address America’s disillusionment with politics and political parties. His speech champions the new Republican theme of compassionate conservatism and inclusion. It remains to be seen if his address will inspire future keynote speakers to imitate its tone and content, thus reshaping the established expectations for this genre. For the pessimist, it represents the necessary means to an end. The Republican Party desired to create a specific image for the 2000 campaign, which Powell’s speech exemplified. Whether optimism or pessimism wins out, both possibilities deserve attention. Chapter 3 explores the political atmosphere contributing to the rhetorical challenge Powell faced. It begins by providing a brief exploration of factors research attributes to the American public’s current disassociation from politics. It then examines Lloyd Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation in relation to the 2000 presidential campaign. This includes defining and identifying the constituents of exigence, audience, and constraints, central to General Powell’s keynote address.

Chapter 4 analyzes General Powell’s speech in regards to the material presented in the previous chapters. I argue that due to the situation created by an apathetic and
disgruntled electorate, Powell faced a unique challenge in delivering a speech that would appeal to a variety of audiences. My contention is that General Colin Powell rejects the established expectations for a keynote address and presents a landmark piece of political discourse void of partisan accusations. Using the value system of the American Dream, he appeals to the electorate and regenerates faith in the possibility for non-partisan solutions to seminal political problems.

Chapter 5 provides a brief conclusion to this study. By analyzing the relationship between exigence, audience, and constraints within a rhetorical situation, I illustrate how General Powell utilized his rhetorical style and language choices to unite his audience and overcome the challenges inherent to the 2000 election. Through this process, I hope to further our understanding of communicative acts and as well as show that the theory of rhetorical situation benefits the analysis of recurrent discursive acts.

I begin by providing a brief overview of political communication and progress to a discussion of one of the major events associated with the political campaign process—the National Party Convention. One of the few rhetorical highlights noted in a political campaign occurs at these conventions—the keynote address. Chapter 1 ends with an exploration of literature that establishes the rhetorical significance of and generic expectations for the keynote address. This foundation is essential for understanding the significant break from tradition that occurred in the keynote address at the 2000 Republican National Convention.
Review of Related Literature

Electing the president of the United States is a complex process full of rich history and tradition. Communication scholar Robert Denton, Jr. writes:

Presidential campaigns are our national conversations. They are highly complex and sophisticated communication events: communication of issues, images, social reality, and personas. They are essentially exercises in the creation, recreation, and transmission of 'significant symbols' through human communication. As we attempt to make sense of our environment, 'political bits' of communication comprise our voting choices, worldviews, and legislative desires. (2002 xiv)

Roderick Hart asserts that presidential campaigns are conversations "among three dominant voices—the press, the people, and the nation's leaders" (xiv). He admits that despite deficiencies, political campaigns "keep people talking about politics" (9). Judith Trent and Robert Friedenberg note that communication is "the means by which the campaign begins, proceeds, and concludes." They suggest that it is the "epistemological base. Without it, there is no political campaign" (14).

According to Hart, campaigns serve four positive functions: 1) teaching, 2) preaching, 3) sensitizing, and 4) activating. Hart writes that:

A good campaign teaches a culture its culture, helps it set its priorities, and sorts out the visionary from the visionless [...]. A good campaign expands what we think about as citizens and puts us in touch with people whose problems are different from our own [...]. Political candidates [...] embrace the expanse of the citizenry, to use its separate histories to
find its common future. And so when voters roust themselves out of their slumber on those quadrennial November mornings, something sacred happens. (11)

Campaigns provide us with leaders, grant the "authority to govern," "add to our memory or image of the electoral process," and provide "proof that the system is a good one" (Trent and Friedenberg 4). Arthur Miller and Bruce Gronbeck add, "the images of candidates, citizens, and society that are constructed during campaigns reflect the beliefs, expectations, behaviors, and democratic ideals that characterize American political culture" (261-62).

Significant changes have occurred in the political campaign that make "principles and practices accepted by practitioners and theorists even 15 years ago" largely irrelevant today (Trent and Friedenberg 4). Four such changes are: 1) the decline in the influence of political parties, 2) changes in electoral financial legislation, 3) the advent of political action committees, and 4) technological advances (Trent and Friedenberg 5). Though important to the political campaign process as a whole, a detailed discussion of each is not warranted here. Two issues, the declining influence of political parties and the influence of technology on political campaigns, will be explored later.

Within the modern political campaign are separate and discrete stages that have "a direct relationship to and bearing on all that follow," thereby affecting the campaign's outcome (Trent and Friedenberg 19). One such stage is the nominating convention, also referred to as the national convention or party convention, which is an event marking the close of the primary season (Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 2000).
National Party Conventions

Larry Smith and Dan Nimmo describe national party conventions as “elaborate gatherings of the party faithful to rejuvenate their political juices, celebrate their partisan loyalties” and prepare for the upcoming campaign (6). They compare the modern convention to creating music—one note following the last to form a tune. In extending this metaphor further, they note:

   during the early days of opera and of conventions, virtuoso talents were free to do as they pleased. The show was built around stars with few (or no) standardized performances. This is no longer the case. The contemporary party convention, like the musical opera, follows a tightly woven script that dictates virtuoso performances; if they occur at all, they do so under controlled circumstances. (15)

As would be expected, changes to the modern campaign affect the discrete parts that comprise the entire process. Rachel Holloway describes presidential nominating conventions as “made-for-television campaign rallies designed to frame the coming election and position the candidate for the November election” (117). Bill Greener, 1996 Republican convention manager, says of the convention’s purpose: “We just formally pick a president and vice president, the nominees give their speeches, and that’s all people really remember. This is a TV show, and if you stay disciplined, you can leave a good basic impression of your party and nominees” (Sabato 95). The objectives and content of party conventions are quite different from those in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
Starting as early as 1832, nominating presidential and vice presidential candidates was the primary purpose of the event (Plano and Greenberg). The power to nominate candidates resided in the national conventions until 1968 (Blankenship, Robson, and Williams 1022). Now, “with presidential primaries held in most states,” both the delegates and voters know the candidate before the convention begins—“usually by the end of March” (Plano and Greenberg 102). This represents the most substantial change in the nominating convention and has the greatest impact on the communicative functions served.

Trent and Friedenberg identify four important communicative functions served by modern conventions. First, they legitimate and reaffirm the *rightness* of the American dream. This is accomplished through “keynote speeches, nomination speeches, debates, [...] greetings from past party heroes, patriotic music, buttons, [and] hats” that “renew our faith that U.S. citizens share not only a glorious tradition but a grand and proud future” (49). Second, conventions legitimate the party’s nominees. Third, conventions provide the party an opportunity to show its unity. This is necessary especially after a heated primary season. Candidates have the opportunity to come together and show support for the presidential nominee. Fourth, conventions afford the public an introduction to the “candidate’s rhetorical agenda for the general election campaign” (54). Holloway adds that during conventions, “each party works to solidify its political base, reach out to undecided voters, and set the agenda for news coverage of its candidate” (117).

According to Trent and Friedenberg, the introduction of television, the reliance on primaries to select delegates for the convention, and the emergence of campaign
specialists who determine important aspects of the convention are the three factors contributing most to the changes (44-48). These factors leave the convention open to becoming what Blankenship, Robson, and Williams refer to as a "television mini-series about unity" (1022). According to Larry Sabato, the planning for national party conventions begins "at least eighteen months in advance, long before the nominees are known for certain" and the cost of production continues to rise (94). With the advent of campaign managers, control over convention events has been taken from party leaders. It now resides with the candidates and their advisors. Whereas the role of the nominating convention was once instrumental or pragmatic, it is now chiefly symbolic or ritualistic (Trent and Friedenberg 43). Instead of nominating the party's candidates, it legitimizes those identified through the primary season.

Despite losing the key tradition of actually nominating candidates, other traditions have remained constant or have enjoyed an increase in significance. These include two of the remaining speaking events: the keynote address and the acceptance speech. Smith and Nimmo note that in the group-mediated era, these speeches "were further institutionalized which, in turn, led to more standardized renditions" (36). Before moving to a discussion of the keynote address and its characteristics, it is appropriate to detail some of the technological advances and changes within the political campaign referenced to previously and representative of the group-mediated era Smith and Nimmo reference. An exploration of technology at this point helps establish the importance of the keynote address in modern conventions, as well as political campaigns. This also assists the reader in understanding better the diminished rhetorical opportunities offered to political speakers.
The Impact of Technology

Beginning with broadcast radio, continuing through the television age, and now merging with the Internet, technologies are a key driving force in the format of political party conventions. Technologies affect the audience's ability to participate passively and actively in nominating conventions; in turn adding to the challenge of achieving desired responses through rhetoric. Despite the access to political rhetoric offered by technology, much of it is overlooked by news media and the public. Hart identifies several reasons why this occurs.

First, members of the press are "largely bored by the campaign speeches they hear and the handouts provided by campaign staff." Second, reporters operate under minimal time spans, thereby leaving little time for today's texts to be put into historical context. Kathleen Hall Jamieson states "that it is impossible to adequately warrant complex claims in sixty, thirty, twenty, or fourteen seconds" (1988 14). Third, "average citizens also feel superior to political discourse." They assume they have the ability to sort through the messages, separating the good from the bad "without external guidance." Unfortunately, as Jamieson argues, television's audiovisual nature has a profound effect on "the parts that stand for the whole discourse or event" (1988 114). And Joseph Nye suggests that "information is conveyed by what people see, not just by what they hear," with a result of media-generated messages often being confused by the public (17). Events are being represented, Jamieson writes, by what television news "elects to show visually, not what it says verbally." As a result, "we are more likely to recall events in the snapshots into which television framed them than we are from the words accompanying those
snapshots” (1988 114). Finally, many scholars “do not know what to do with the campaign texts and hence look to polling data for their truths” (Hart 16-17).

The power held by the networks to affect the campaign process is one negative repercussion of modern “media-centered campaigns” (Hart 14). Daron Shaw notes that political communication scholars are concerned “about voters’ abilities to keep up with the enormous changes in communication technology and wonder how these changes will affect the quality and intensity of their political interactions with one another” (17). By the late 1990s, more people obtained their political information from the television than from newspapers (Nye 17). The Pew Research Center reports that in 2000, “only 24% cited newspapers as their primary source for information on the results of the election and its aftermath (“Youth Vote” 11). Television allows others to determine what is shown, thereby altering the “shape, structure, and activities of the convention” (Trent and Friedenberg 46).

Since the three major broadcast networks identified national conventions as great television early in the television age, they provided near constant coverage. The format and content of national conventions evolves to ensure continued audience appeal. This results in the production of huge pep rallies full of entertainment, ritual, and pomp with which we are familiar (Denton 2002 8). As recently as 1976, the major networks provided more than 50 hours of convention coverage, but this significant dedication of airtime is no longer the case.

In 1996, the three major commercial networks devoted a meager 12 hours to convention coverage. PBS correspondent Terence Smith reported that would likely shrink to four hours in 2000. Network executives said their coverage in 2004 may be
"reduced to the acceptance speech alone" (T. Smith NewsHour). Andrew Heyward, President of CBS News, claimed that it is impossible to justify extensive “coverage of something that—without using the pejorative word ‘infomercial’—really is a political pep rally” (T. Smith NewsHour).

The fact that national party conventions are no longer true nominating processes has led the three major networks to view them as not newsworthy. However, Rick Kaplan, President of CNN/U.S., was embarrassed by the amount of time dedicated to trashing the 2000 conventions: “I don’t buy the argument that this isn’t interesting, that it’s dull TV. It’s certainly interesting to anyone who takes their vote seriously” (Walsh 6). Pundits, politicians, and even some network executives argue that “since broadcasters get their spectrum for nothing” the networks are obligated “to cover political conventions as part of their public service requirement” (Walsh 6). Edward Rendell, General Chair for the Democratic National Convention agreed stating: “The networks ought to cover four hours a night, four times a week for both conventions, and if they lose money, they ought to take their lumps” (T. Smith NewsHour).

The reduction in convention coverage by the three major commercial networks does not mean the end of election coverage. Other media have stepped in willingly to fill the void. All-news cable channels (CNN, MSNBC, C-SPAN, etc.) have increased their coverage and are represented more heavily—of the 15,000 journalists at the Republican Convention, 400 represented CNN (T. Smith NewsHour). The Internet was also a major contributor to news coverage of the 2000 Republican National Convention.

According to Kathleen DeLaski, director of political and government programming for America On Line (AOL), the Internet “is going to soar as the medium for this and
other kinds of political events, because it can allow people to determine for themselves [...] what their experience is going to be” (T. Smith NewsHour). Andrew Weinstein, also of AOL agrees. He states the Internet will “revolutionize the way elections are covered, but more importantly, the way citizens interact with their government” (Koblentz 22). In 2000, Internet subscribers watched a “24-hour convention cam,” participated in nightly online chats, viewed 360-degrees of the arena, and received a live, hourly webcast from the convention (T. Smith NewsHour).

Though cable television and the Internet have filled a void created by the commercial broadcast channels, the limited coverage of the conventions is still a concern to many. 2000 Republican National Committee Chair Jim Nicholson criticized the television networks for reducing the amount of airtime. He stated that democracy is too important to be left to the small number of people who can afford the more extensive coverage provided by cable television and the Internet (“Convention Tidbits”). Data collected for the Pew Research Center found that even though most major demographic groups have increased their use of the Internet for election news, “young people, as well as more educated and wealthier individuals remain the most likely to consume this type of news online” (“Youth Vote” 4). The Pew study also reported “most Americans who followed the results of the presidential election and its confusing aftermath [83%] overwhelmingly turned to television for information” (“Youth Vote” 11). Nicholson’s concerns regarding access to political events by all is valid and deserves attention. If coverage by the commercial networks continues to decrease, the cost of cable television and/or availability to a computer with Internet access limits active participation in the political process for some Americans. Not even the Public Broadcasting System, the only station
to provide complete prime-time convention coverage in 2000, is available to everyone with a television. In some areas of the country, it is available only to cable subscribers. It remains to be seen how these and future changes will influence the composition of future national party conventions.

Keynote Address

The presidential and vice-presidential candidates are the central characters of a national party convention. They receive the most attention and television airtime, but the keynote address functions as a celebrated, orchestrated, and standardized virtuoso performance that also receives much attention. The speech enjoys greater political recognition as a critical aspect of modern national party conventions due to its ability to satisfy the four communicative functions Trent and Friedenberg identify.

The keynote allows convention rituals to be "witnessed by the party faithful" (Benoit, Blaney, and Pier 2000 61), earning it classification as generic rhetoric. Jamieson notes that communication scholars tend "to treat genre as a trusted friend whose identity is known, whose function is clear, and whose utility is established" (1973 162). She adds that genres form "in response to a rhetor's perception of the expectations of the audience and the demands of the situation" (1973 163).

John Murphy and Thomas Burkholder identify three generic themes in the keynote address. The keynote, they conclude, 1) "define[s] the times in which we live," 2) "create[s] a people to be served by the party in these times," and 3) "visualize[s] the bright vistas that will result if only the people will perform the identity offered by the party" (137). Blankenship and her colleagues note four constant symbolic functions at the communicative core of the keynote address. These include:
reaffirming the general commitment this country has to the electoral process and to the rightness of the American way or dream (reenacting the vision of America, celebrating the party’s history and tradition, what we stand for, who we are); formally anointing and legitimating the parties’ nominees; identifying the enemy and rallying the troops for the general election ahead; and demonstrating party unity (or creating the impression of unity) while providing public introduction to the candidates’ rhetorical agendas for the general election. (1021)

These functions mirror those identified as goals for national party conventions, which can be attributed to the fact that the keynote is one of the few aspects of campaign rhetoric to survive the changing content of the convention. It also signifies the increased importance of the keynote address as political communication. Beyond affirming the democratic way, and uniting the party, the goals of the keynote address are to affirm the party’s nominees and prove them as more worthy than those of the other party.

The goals of the keynote are achieved by utilizing the three tactics Benoit, Blaney, and Pier maintain are intrinsic functions of most political campaign discourse: acclaiming; attacking; and defending. Acclaiming is evidenced through self-praise, or if being done by another, through praise for the candidate. It “may focus either on policy stands or on character of the candidate” (Benoit et al. 1998 13). Attacking is used to criticize the opposition. Just as with acclaiming, attacking “may focus on either the policies or the character of the opponent” (13). Defending is used by candidates to defend themselves after being attacked by an opponent. After analyzing Democratic and Republican keynote speeches delivered from 1960 to 1996, Benoit et al. found attacking
and acclaiming occur most frequently, 439 and 473 times, respectively (1998 108). The utilization of acclaim or attack is reflective of which party occupies the White House. Incumbents tend to acclaim more than they attack, while challengers tend to attack more than they acclaim. During the period Benoit et al. studied, the Republican Party had an incumbent president in office more then the Democrats, which accounts for why “Republicans acclaimed (282) more than they attacked (222), while Democrats attacked (217) more than they acclaimed (191)” (1998 109).

Whether delivered by the candidate or a supporter, these functions are necessary components of campaign speeches because “a candidate must appear to be different from his or her opponents in ways that will attract voters” (1998 13). The candidate must persuade the constituency that he or she is the right person for the job. The supporter persuades the audience by highlighting the candidate’s accomplishments and potential, and sometimes by pointing out the opponent’s flaws and inabilities. According to Mark Moore, “presidential candidates who challenge incumbents are increasingly inclined to adopt cynical attitudes in their appeals to cynical audiences. While this strategy can produce short term gains, and even campaign victory, it contributes to more cynical or pessimistic attitudes toward government in the long run” (22). It perpetuates itself because in order to capitalize on the disgruntled public’s cynicism, the candidate adopts a cynical stance (Dionne; Moore). The political discourse created by this cycle “seems to be more polarized, succeeding only when it can praise supporters and demonize opponents” (Denton and Woodward 31).

Jimmy Carter’s 1976 presidential campaign employed such cynical rhetoric to attack the incumbent. Carter “capitalized on political scandals like Watergate and Nixon’s
secret war in Cambodia to fuel an election campaign based on antigovernment themes of corruption, abuse, and public disillusionment” (Moore 26). These tactics do not solve problems: problems continue to escalate, people become more cynical, campaign discourse becomes more cynical in response, and so on (Dionne; Moore). Benoit et al. offer an interesting conclusion in their research on the keynote address: in comparison to other campaign messages, the keynote is more negative than acceptance speeches, television spots, and debates (2000 77). They believe this negativism results from the keynoter being a surrogate, whereas in the other forms of political discourse “the candidate is the rhetor” (77-78).

Benoit et al. also asked who was the target of the keynote address and whether this “target of utterances” shifted over time. In recent speeches (1980-1996), they found the party was less an emphasis than the candidate. Early speeches (1960-1976) “tended to focus on the political parties, whereas recent speeches are more candidate centered” (2000 72). Murphy and Burkholder agree, remarking that the keynote address “is concerned more with party than with candidate, and, as such, is the ideal site for the analysis of party rhetoric in a posttraditional world” (132). This shift results from the party’s decreased control in coordinating the convention and increased emphasis placed upon the candidate’s character over his or her stance on policy or party affiliation.

Since the keynote address is “a highlight of the quadrennial celebration of the major political parties” (Benoit et al. 2000 61), the responsibility to achieve the desired communicative results or to generate the appropriate atmosphere falls on one member of the party. Jamieson claims that the rhetor “cannot avoid the play of traditional forms on encapsulation of his [sic] message” (1973 166). Through the keynote address, the
speaker aims to rebuild or celebrate the party’s unity and preview key themes that will be developed during the final stage of the campaign (Benoit et al. 2000). Keynoters accomplish this task by recapturing the faith in the rightness of the American way through the values encapsulated by the American Dream. The keynoter aspires to bring the party back together and affirm the candidates. These tasks are not always easy; therefore, the selection of the appropriate keynote speaker is essential.

Edwin Miles states that the keynote is usually “a distinguished member of the party” selected “in recognition of his [sic] services,” who has no major association with any candidate, and who is not “generally regarded as a contender for the presidency” (27). He adds oratorical eloquence is not a primary consideration, but the party must consider a speaker’s ability to formulate and deliver an effective speech—especially to fulfill the generic functions of the keynote. This is accomplished through language “inclined to be bombastic […] in glorifying the brilliant accomplishments of his [sic] own party or in lamenting the dismal failures of the opposition” (26).

A century ago “personality was not so intimately associated with a person’s public rhetoric,” whereas today, “speech is now a signal of our deeper nature, the unique signature of our personality” (Denton and Woodward 27-28). The Republican Party was first to depart from the established expectations when it selected a keynote speaker who was not a distinguished member of the party. In 1952, General Douglas MacArthur was the first military figure assigned the task. He was closely associated with one presidential candidate (Miles) and was known for his persona and eloquence, not his affiliation with the Party. The audience’s perception of a speaker is now essential because an appropriate keynote speaker plays “a significant role in presidential campaigns” (Miles 27).
In today's politics, charisma is important for every candidate seeking office. Charisma sets him or her apart from other candidates. It is also important for parties to have such charismatic members to highlight during the campaign process. According to The American Political Dictionary, charisma is "an attribute of leadership based on personal qualities of the individual. Charismatic leaders typically have magnetic personalities, a dedication to achieving their objectives, unusual powers of persuasion, and ability to excite and gain the loyalty of supporters" (Plano and Greenberg 73). With fewer speaking opportunities allotted in the modern convention format, a party can ill afford an ineffective rhetorical display.

Frank Myers states, "the ability to formulate statements that communicate distinct, and perhaps even incompatible, messages simultaneously to diverse audiences is [...] crucial to political success" (55). In 1996, the Republican Party selected New York Congresswoman Susan Molinari as the "keynoter because she is an energetic speaker who can hold the attention of a crowd" (Blankenship et al. 1036). Molinari was valuable to her party because of "the accurate perception of Republicans and Democrats alike that 'the women's vote' would be pivotal in the presidential election" (Blankenship et al. 1021). She was a young, independent, charismatic working mother ready to cut government down to size (1036). Though it is impossible to influence all audiences equally, success is measured "by the degree to which the speech increases the potential support for the speaker and his [sic] policies among the most significant segments of the audience" (Myers 57). Despite the Republican loss in 1996, Molinari was regarded as a "talented and well chosen" keynoter for the party's convention.
In the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries, the immediate audience receiving a political keynote address was relatively homogenous. Comprised of the party faithful and the delegates, the audience shared the same convictions. Those not attending had to wait for the message to circulate by word-of-mouth, or for a transcript to appear in print. This situation removed the need for rhetors to address or even consider multiple or heterogeneous audiences. Orations could be designed for a specific, narrow audience—either the Democratic or the Republican delegates. Even with a limited audience sharing core values and convictions, a keynote speaker may face a challenging situation, especially in a tight battle for the party's nomination, as was the case for the 1968 Republican keynote speaker.

According to Washington Governor Daniel J. Evans, the job of keynote speaker was "a real challenge—a challenge to articulate the principles of Republicanism to the nation as a whole" (C. Smith 33). When Evans delivered his speech, nominations still occurred at the convention and three candidates were vying for the presidency. Craig Smith contends that Evans "was forced to balance three audiences: the conservative audience of delegates, the general American audience who were more conservative than he, and the voters in Washington who were more liberal than the general American audience," as well as the interests of three candidates (32).

Evans faced the formidable task of creating a speech that would please all and offend none (33). In order to meet this challenge, Evans devised a speech that "did not inspire great enthusiasm from any group" (33). Craig Smith states this strategy provides "a good illustration of the dangers of rhetorical effectiveness based on too much adaptation" (33). In an effort to avoid antagonism, Evans omitted certain arguments from his speech, "the
resulting discourse was so cautious, it forfeited interest” (33). The situation Daniel Evans faced when he served as keynote speaker illustrates that several factors must be considered by the rhetor and influence the formulation of successful political discourse. Potential challenges facing a keynote speaker have increased with the advancement of radio, television, and the Internet as audiences have become larger, diversified, and more focused on the character of the candidate and/or the speaker.

This chapter has shown the importance of political campaigns in that they represent America’s national conversation. They serve multiple functions including teaching, preaching, sensitizing, and activating (Hart). Campaigns construct “images of candidates, citizens, and society that [...] reflect the beliefs, expectations, behaviors, and democratic ideals that characterize American political culture” (Miller and Gronbeck 261-62). Campaigns have undergone several changes that affect the frequency and content of rhetorical acts. One such act is the keynote address. It is distinct from other convention rhetoric in that it represents what Aristotle terms political rhetoric and ceremonial oratory of display, which either praises or blames. Further, technology plays a role in shaping the modern political campaign by expanding the audience exposed to discourse. Research indicates that the person chosen to deliver it must be appropriate to achieve desired political outcomes. Keeping this in mind, I will look at the life and career of Retired General Colin Powell in order to provide a detailed understanding of his significance as the appropriate keynote speaker for the Republican Party at the 2000 convention.
CHAPTER 2

COLIN L. POWELL: THE GENERAL, THE ORATOR

Many consider Vietnam to be "America's first true televised war" (Hallin 105), but technological advances allowed the Persian Gulf War to be the first in which networks had the "capacity to cover the entire globe in 'real time,' as it were, and in ever sharper clarity and color" (B. Cohen 8). For many Americans, coverage that provided them "the opportunity, in the comfort of their homes, to witness a war from the vantage point of actual participants" (B. Cohen 8) also introduced them to Army General Colin L. Powell. For many, Powell became a representation of America's military strategy and strength. However, many Americans are unaware of the breadth of Powell's service to his country during the three decades preceding the Gulf War. The purpose of this portion of the Review of Literature is to provide a foundational understanding of the man and his career.

As indicated in Chapter 1, General Powell's keynote address carries significant political and rhetorical significance. But as Chapter 2 reveals, Powell is an intriguing public figure whose personal accomplishments, popular public persona, and political affiliation contribute to his significance as a keynote speaker. Powell's experiences and beliefs influence the content, style, and ethos that comprise his distinctive rhetorical style discussed at the end of the chapter. This exploration will be beneficial when analyzing his 2000 Republican National Convention keynote address. Unless otherwise noted, the
following chronology is gleaned primarily from his autobiography, *My American Journey*. The book was first published in 1995, two years after General Powell’s retirement from military service and again in 1996 with an additional “Afterward” by Powell. Supplemental materials are used to add to the understanding of this prominent public figure.

Powell’s “is the story of a black kid of no early promise from an immigrant family of limited means who was raised in the South Bronx and somehow rose to become the National Security Advisor to the President of the United States and then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (ix). Unlike other political figures, few admit such a lackluster beginning void of direction or ambition. Despite his successes and prominent Washington appointments, Powell’s autobiography reveals an incredibly self-effacing man. In reviewing Powell’s book, Fred Greenstein describes him as “intelligent, articulate, and ingratiating; a shrewd judge of character; and a knowledgeable and skilled Washington player. He also is unabashedly patriotic, free of doctrine, and deeply conscious of being African-American and to a lesser extent of his Jamaican heritage” (629).

Powell’s parents were Jamaican immigrants who came to America “with nothing but hope, a willingness to work hard and a desire to use the opportunities given them by their new land” (Powell 1996 4). Growing up in the South Bronx, New York, he escaped the racism and discrimination prevalent in the United States. Banana Kelly, so called because the street curved like a banana, was a neighborhood where all ethnic groups played together. As a child, Powell had no sense of belonging to a racial minority,

---

3 Parenthetical citations are paragraph numbers added to electronic sources for clarification.
“because on Banana Kelly there was no majority. Everybody was either a Jew, an Italian, a Pole, a Greek, a Puerto Rican, or, as we said in those days, a Negro” (19).

Academically, Powell was over-shadowed by his sister’s accomplishments. He “lacked drive, not ability […] was amenable, amiable, and aimless” (12). He realized he would “not be a jock or musician,” but still, he “was a happy kid” (13). Powell’s love for and commitment to his military career is also quite admirable. At the age of seventeen, Powell entered the City College of New York. Here, in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, he realized his life’s passion: “As soon as I got home, I put the uniform on and looked in the mirror. I liked what I saw […] The uniform gave me a sense of belonging, and something I had never experienced all the while I was growing up; I felt distinctive” (26). The Army became his life and after college, his career.

While stationed in Georgia, Powell found not all neighborhoods shared the inclusive spirit of Banana Kelly. He learned Woolworth’s or other department stores would take his money as long as he did not try to eat there or use the restroom. He learned that he could walk down the street, as long as he did not look at the white women (41). The racism and discrimination experienced off the Army post did not defeat him; it motivated him. Powell told himself:

If people in the South insisted on living by crazy rules, then I would play the hand dealt me for now. If I was to be confined to one end of the playing field, then I was going to be a star on that part of the field […].

Racism was not just a black problem. It was America’s problem. And until the country solved it, I was not going to let bigotry make me a victim instead of a full human being. (42)
Twenty-eight years later, Powell and his wife, Alma, would return to this small town in Georgia for the dedication of the General Colin L. Powell Parkway. The mayor would present him to the keys to the city—the city that would not give him the “key to a gas station men’s room” in the old days (552). Powell states: “We had persevered, and we had lived the American dream” (553).

Powell writes that on the Army post, race was less of an issue. For him, the Army was “living the democratic ideal ahead of the rest of America” (61). There he experienced “less discrimination, a truer merit system, and leveler playing fields” (61), which made it easier for Powell to “love my country, with all its flaws, and to serve her with all my heart” (61). Social scientist Christopher Ellison concurs, “the U.S. armed forces have historically been relatively integrated when compared to other social institutions” (361). Ellison notes the recent “selection of a black officer to head the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (361) to exemplify this statement. That black officer is Colin Powell, the first black man to occupy the position. The military is “a particularly attractive option for many young black males,” since it is “a key source of socioeconomic mobility” considering the “relative dearth of opportunities in civilian life” (Ellison 361). In particular, the armed forces provide access to higher education and job-related skills (Ellison 373).

Powell’s two tours in Viet Nam molded his views on war and “the causes worth fighting and dying for, America’s political leadership, and civilian defense officials” (Cohen 8).⁴ Throughout his career, Powell employed these views when necessary and urged clear political goals be established before any military intervention occurred. With clear political goals, the military commitment can be made to match those goals because

---

⁴ Parenthetical citations are paragraph numbers added to electronic sources for clarification.
“American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board” (561). Though aware of the Army’s and American military’s shortcomings, Powell remained dedicated to his profession’s tenets and proud of his military service.

Considering his previous lack of direction and poor academic performance, even Powell admits surprise at the heights he has achieved. Fortunately, he encountered many “exemplars and patrons who thought well of him and advanced his career accordingly” (Cohen 4). His charisma contributed to his success and people’s willingness to back his advancement. In a review of General Powell’s autobiography, Eliot Cohen notes that “Powell did not claw his way to the top in the face of professional or personal hardship; he rose in favorable circumstances by ability and ebullient charm” (4).

Having such influential mentors and supporters is probably why, despite his love for the Army and desire to serve as a commander, Powell could not escape notice by officials in Washington. As mentioned earlier, he is most well known for his service during the Gulf War under President George H. W. Bush. But, Powell also served Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Clinton. In 1977, Powell accepted a position in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he served for two and a half years in the Carter Administration (225). At this time, he was up for two positions, neither of which he wanted, but “turning down the White House does not come easily to a soldier schooled in obedience” (225). Powell would continue his service for the Reagan administration until 1981 when he returned to the Army. Powell’s commitment to and desire for military service outweighed any desire to be part of Washington politics, but this loyalty always brought him back.
In 1983, Powell was asked by Casper Weinberger to take another position in Washington, to that he replied “No, Mr. Secretary, I’m happy where I am. But, I’ll serve wherever I’m sent” (270). This marked his return to the Reagan White House, where he would serve until 1986. At this time, Powell returned to the Army to fulfill a career dream: to be a corps commander. Powell had been in the position for less than one year when Washington associates called soliciting his help at the National Security Council.

Since he had only been back in the Army for such a short period of time, Powell felt there was only one way he could leave again and be able to face his fellow officers. Powell told Frank Carlucci “it has to be a request directly from the commander in chief” (319). Later, he would answer the telephone to hear “the commanding voice of a White House operator” telling him the President was calling (319). Powell recalls “Ronald Reagan came on the line [...] He knew what a fine job I was doing with V Corps. He knew how much the command meant to me. He knew how happy Alma and I were in Frankfurt. [...] but it was critical for the country that I come home. ‘Yes, sir,’ I answered, ‘I’ll do it.’ I had no choice” (319). Here, Powell exhibits the mindset of the career military man: despite personal goals, he would do as his commander-in-chief requested.

This may be an admirable characteristic in a military leader, but once Powell became an active Republican, it would become a point of contention. In an interview after his 2000 Republican National Convention keynote address, Charlie Gibson of ABC’s Good Morning America asked if he had noted Governor Bush’s statement hoping Powell’s public service days were not over? Powell’s response was “If I’m made an offer by a President, I always have to take it under serious consideration” (“Powell and Bush?” abcNews). A statement of little surprise considering he had done so repeatedly during his
35 years of military service. Yet, some used this statement out of context to cast doubt on Powell and his politics.

Powell’s service during the Reagan administration was especially enjoyable for him since it was influential in reestablishing national pride in the armed forces—something he felt was lacking due to a string of deflating military ventures. After Reagan entered office, Powell states “one thing soon became apparent: the World War II generation was back in the saddle” (248). President Reagan’s war experience was limited, but “he liked to dwell on it” (248). As for the military personnel serving in the White House, things quickly changed for them also: “We no longer had to hide in civvies [. . .] The military services had been restored to a place of honor” (249). Powell said he would remain in Washington as National Security Advisor for Reagan and later as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Presidents Bush and Clinton, until he retired from the Army in 1993.

Allusions to Powell’s political affiliation or lack thereof are scattered throughout My American Journey. As a member of the armed forces, Powell “studiously avoided doing or saying anything political” (590). He was conscientious about maintaining a neutral political stance. As Powell reveals in commenting on his voting record in presidential elections, he knew officers who avoided voting “in order to remain politically pure,” but he did not. Instead, Powell split his ticket as his “way of expressing nonpartisanship” (243). When discussing his vote in the 1976 presidential election, he reveals he “had not enrolled in a party” (219), nor did he as long as he was in military uniform.

Early social psychological studies on voting habits argue “that voters develop attachments to one or the other political party early in life and rely on this predisposition
to structure political reality and serve as a perceptual screen” (Shaw 4). But, according to Shaw, “opinions and preferences are greatly influenced by economic and social conditions, as well as (presumably) the manner in which the candidates and the media frame those conditions” (5). Shaw’s observation helps understand the current trend of split ticket voting and decreased party affiliation and allegiance. In today’s society, the influence of technology on what voters see, as well as issues that affect them directly, are more influential than party attachments.

Powell was first eligible to vote in the election of 1960. From his station in Gelnhausen, Germany, Powell cast his absentee ballot for Kennedy. He recalled that “not much searching analysis” went into his vote, because at that time, “[Kennedy] and [the Democrats] seemed to hold out a little more hope for a young man of my roots” (52). Here again, we see Powell’s early politics reflecting much of the same sentiments expressed by American’s that vote on the candidate’s stance on issues, not by party designation. In the presidential election of 1976, Powell again supported a Democrat because “after the ordeal of Watergate, the country needed a fresh start” (219). Powell faced the election of 1980 with mixed feelings. He supported Carter in 1976, but could not do so again. The administration had faced many challenges, but “on a whole, the vibrations coming out of the Carter White House were not comforting to the military profession” (242). Powell’s commitment to remain politically neutral did not stop others from offering their opinions regarding his future political affiliations; especially as his retirement neared and rumors circulated of a possible political candidacy in 1992.

Late in 1991, California Republican Congressman Ron Dellums told Powell he was potentially the Democratic Party’s fondest dream and its worst nightmare (531). If
Powell turned out to be Republican, he would “split the black vote, and [the Democrats] don’t have a prayer” (531). Election rumors continued into 1992 when Republican Stu Sage advised Powell that if he goes into politics, he do so as a Democrat because he would not be comfortable with parts of the Republican agenda. Sage states: “You were raised in an old-fashioned Democratic home. You’re too socially conscious” (540). In 1994, Powell traveled with many other prominent African-Americans to South Africa for the inauguration of Nelson Mandela. Powell notes “it is no secret that a vast majority of American blacks are Democrats and that far more are liberal than conservative” (579). And “in the eyes of this group, I was a product of those trickle-down conservative Republicans Reagan and Bush” (580). A member of the National Political Congress of Black Women told Powell that he should go into politics, but as a Democrat because he was “too nice to be a Republican” (580). Conversely, Greenstein believes “Powell would exercise a moderating influence on the Republican party, he would command sustained public support and be an effective problem solver. The fact that he is African-American provides “an impetus to Americans to mend their racial divisions” and sends a message “throughout the world about the resiliency of American democracy” (629).

On the day of Powell’s retirement ceremony, President Clinton offered him several possible part-time public service positions. Among these was work with Clinton’s “national service program for young people.” Though he declined at the time, he indicated that if he “were to take any of those spots it would be the youth program” (572). In the years following his retirement, and before the fury of speculation about a potential political career, Powell became active in programs focusing on America’s youth.
In the “Epilogue” to My American Journey, Powell reveals his views on the politics he avoided during his military career. Eliot Cohen expresses disappointment at this “thin” effort that seems “so carefully contrived” (24). Powell characterizes himself as a fiscal conservative and a moderate on social issues: “I was clearly out of step with the prevailing social views of the very conservative, activist wing of the Republican Party, although probably very much in step with the mainstream. At the same time, I characterized the Democratic Party as out of step with the needs of the American People and philosophically bankrupt” (598).

In 1996, Powell added the “Afterward” to My American Journey that details the events surrounding rumors of his potential involvement in the upcoming presidential election. On November 8, 1996, General Powell held a press conference to announce he would “not be a candidate for President or for any other elective office in 1996” (601). He added that he would “continue to speak out forcefully in the future on the issues of the day” and he would be doing so “as a member of the Republican Party” (602). His affiliation with the Republican Party must have surprised many since he devoted much of his 1996 convention speech to explaining why he is Republican. Lenora Fulani, “the first woman and first African-American” to be “on the ballot in all 50 states” comments that Powell violates “a basic axiom of American politics—that black leadership properly belongs in the Democratic Party and only in the Democratic Party” (11). According to Fulani, “America has made more progress in being able to accept us a doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, and generals than it has in being able to accept us as anything other than Democrats” (11).
In 1997, Presidents Clinton, George H.W. Bush, Carter, and Ford and former First Lady Nancy Reagan, along with “nearly 30 governors, 100 mayors, 145 community delegations, dozens of prominent business leaders, and several thousand concerned citizens” (“Our History,” Promise) gathered in Philadelphia for the President’s Summit for America’s Future. Their purpose was to “urge all Americans to dig deeper, pull together and dramatically increase the nation’s long-term commitment to our young people” (“Our Founder,” Promise). General Powell served as chairperson of the event and later as the founding chairperson of America’s Promise, a position he held until George W. Bush appointed him Secretary of State. Though no longer chairperson, the mission of providing for America’s children continues to be the passion of his life (Powell 2000 15), which is reflected in his discourse.

Powell’s Rhetorical Style

In his examination of “the oratory of a General,” Richard Leeman identifies characteristics of Powell’s oratorical style. Leeman makes these observations based on discourse delivered between 1988 and 1995. Much of which occurred while Powell was still active duty military and included acceptance speeches acknowledging awards and honors and commencement addresses. Even though these observations were based on discourse delivered before General Powell’s entrance into political communication as a member of the Republican Party, Leeman’s remarks provide valuable insight into Powell as an orator.

Leeman observes that Powell’s oratory “never strays far from the identity of the speaker himself,” and his speeches can be grouped into two types: policy speeches and
ceremonial speeches. Aristotle states “that there are three divisions of oratory – (1) political, (2) forensic, and (3) the ceremonial oratory of display” (1358b). Each division has “distinct ends in view” (1358b), meaning that regardless of the orator, a specific outcome is desired based on the situation in which the discourse occurs. Political rhetoric “urges us either to do or not to do something” and “the political orator is concerned with the future” (Aristotle 1358b). The political orator, then, “aims at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action; if he [sic] urges its acceptance, he does so on the grounds that it will do good; if he urges its rejection, he does so on the ground that it sill do harm” (Aristotle 1358b).

Leeman identifies consistent content and style characteristics evident in Powell’s speeches. Depending on the rhetorical occasion, Leeman observes: “First, his speeches almost always focus on solving a problem. Second, in developing his solutions, Powell typically looks to history, experience, and traditional values. Finally, whether discussing the problem, the solution, or both, his speeches always display a keen awareness of the audience and the occasion” (286-287).

Powell’s rhetorical style reflects “a tight organizational structure” with “clear transition statements to delineate” structure (Leeman 287). Powell’s problem-solving approach to oratory “is a rational one,” where “Powell first identifies the problem and any knowledge we have that might aid in solving that problem, and then enumerates the steps of the solution” (287). Powell draws on history, “especially from that history that he himself has witnessed,” often beginning speeches with a comparison “between current and historical events” (288).
The study of African-American oratory has identified the presence of three common themes. The first is that "of a common exigence: the quest for freedom and equality of treatment." The second "parallels the search for freedom and equality: the upholding of America’s ideals." And the third "is what has sometimes been called ‘black pride’" (Leeman xviii-xx). Leeman writes that "African-American orators have acted as America’s conscience in two ways: by praising America’s ideals and condemning America’s hypocrisy. Some orators have favored one track or the other; many have combined both" (xviii). According to Leeman, Powell’s is an example of discourse that "primarily emphasized America’s lofty principles" (xviii). Powell continues to praise America, but in light of his growing political discourse, Leeman needs to recast him as one who does both. When speaking politically, Powell incorporates both strategies of praise and condemnation, though his tactics for condemnation differ from the attacks typically employed in political discourse mentioned in Chapter 1.

The lessons Powell incorporates into his rhetoric can be labeled as traditional. "Hard work, determination, confidence, family, and America" are the values Powell champions in his discourse (289). Leeman concludes that though much is "businesslike, discussing problems and solutions using a relatively plain style, he is capable of being eloquent" when the situation demands (290), and Powell’s "oratory will probably serve him well, for his public speaking seems fully a part of him, rather than apart from him" (292).

The exploration of General Powell’s life provided at the beginning of the chapter makes it apparent why he was an appropriate choice for the Republican Party’s keynote speaker in 2000. The designation not only recognizes his services to the Republican Party, it indicates the Party’s confidence in his ability to formulate and deliver an
effective speech that fulfills the generic functions of the keynote address. His persona alone might sway some swing voters to the GOP side, but key would be the impact of his words on the delegates and the millions watching the convention on television or participating over the Internet. Powell would be of ultimate use to the Republican Party if he could influence the young, the minority, and/or the swing voter with his rhetoric. In light of the contemporaneous political situation, he faced the challenge of addressing a disillusioned, cynical electorate that was increasingly unaffiliated with either major political party. He faced the challenge of addressing issues that served as “a means to separate oneself or group from a distrusted and increasingly fragmented culture” (Denton and Woodward 24). The problem-solution organization of his discourse and his awareness of audience and occasion will help him face and overcome these challenges.
CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

In *Uncivil Wars: Political Campaigns in a Media Age*, Thomas Hollihan states that "less than half of those who were eligible to vote bothered to do so in 1996, the lowest turnout in any presidential election since 1924" (177). Hollihan adds that the United States ranks thirty-sixth among the world’s 50 most industrialized nations in terms of voter turnout (177). Voter turnout is low, apathy is high, and a general sentiment seems to exist that, as Roderick Hart writes, not much said during a campaign matters. In fact, the three major television networks cite this as the reason for slashing the amount of coverage devoted to national party conventions. Yet, the Review of Literature in Chapter 1 provides evidence that political communication is rich in scholarship and worthy of discussion. This may be a reality for communication, mass communication, journalism, political science, and sociology scholars, but it is not a reality for much of the American public.

Some of the extensive research that examines prevalent attitudes expressed by much of the American electorate is offered in this chapter. It is useful to frame the rhetorical situation Colin Powell faced when he delivered his keynote address in 2000. Areas such as changes in the political process, technological advances, diversification of party loyalty, and decreased party influence are worthy of discussion. Chapter 3 continues by next detailing Lloyd Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation. This includes identification of
the key elements of exigence, audience, and constraints. Bitzer’s theoretical perspective is valuable for understanding the rhetorical challenges General Powell faced and forms the basis for the analysis of the keynote in Chapter 4.

Before dealing with the attitudes of the American electorate toward politics in 2000, it is important to note that during an election year, people tend to become more politically engaged during the immediacy of the campaign. This tendency is especially pronounced as the 2004 presidential election approaches. It follows the highly contested election results of 2000 and the September 11, 2001 attacks, and occurs with America involved in multiple military campaigns. I do not deny observations such as those of former Wall Street Journal reporter Ron Suskind that “people are engaged” and looking to exercise sound judgment in this election year (Tawa “Politics”). Instead, I contend that a general disassociation exists between the American voter and the American political system that extends beyond the months immediately before and after the election. This gap was considerably more pronounced in 2000 than in a post-9/11 culture. Thus, prior research is most relevant for supporting my contention as well as understanding the rhetorical situation around which General Powell’s discourse was delivered.

Most research identifies the 1960s as the turning point in attitudes and sentiments among the electorate by citing significant events such as Viet Nam and Watergate. Other potential contributing factors include the Cold War, the perception of corruption and dishonesty in American politics, and the changing role of media (Blendon et al.; Denton and Woodward; Dionne; Gerstlé et al.). Whether in agreement or disagreement with any or all of the potential causes for political apathy, its existence is indisputable.
Over the years, campaigns have become longer, beginning with the lengthy primaries. The modern campaign knows no season; it never seems to end. As one ends, another begins (Mann; Plano and Greenberg; Trent and Friedenberg). When comparing the 1988 presidential elections in the United States and France, Jacques Gerstlé, Keith Sanders, and Lynda Kaid note that U.S. campaigns typically begin 18 months to 2 years before the election compared to France where official campaigns begin only weeks before (277). Considering campaigns occupy half of the time between presidential elections, "we must actively choose not to be active; hence we are participating symbolically even if not actually" (Gronbeck 271). Since Gronbeck made this observation, changes in television news, the advent of the Internet, and other technological advances make it even more difficult to ignore today's campaign. Trent and Friedenberg comment that "whether we like it or not, we can scarcely avoid taking part in the campaign process" (13).

Candidates reach Americans through mailings, "door-to-door solicitations, speeches, town meetings, coffee hours, [and] factory visits" (Plano and Greenberg 70). Technology allows candidates to inundate us with telephone surveys, television, radio, billboard ads, emails, and political programs. It is no wonder many people feel overwhelmed by politics. Robert Denton and Gary Woodward note the paradox that "while we have never had more access to the processes and moments of the political process—whether it is congressional debate televised on C-SPAN or interviews with the President and legislative leaders on CNN or the major news programs—we have never felt less a part of the process" (23).

According to Joseph Nye, television has had a profound impact on the public, which may account for some of the diminished confidence in government. He argues that it has
altered the political process by allowing politicians to “appeal over the heads of the political parties directly to the public […]. Parties are less effective in connecting politicians with the public, and the negative ads on television and the costs of broadcast time create a greater sense of distance between politicians and the public” (17). Dionne writes that the once positive advertisements that “sought to mobilize voters behind causes and candidates they could believe in” are gone having been replaced with negative advertising that distracts the voter from realizing that the candidate and party have no vision for the future (16).

With respect to the variety of media coverage, the 2000 Republican National Convention was like no other. Shaw notes that in terms of 1992 standards, “the 2000 campaign was a whole new ballgame” (2). Internet providers eagerly replaced the staff and coverage cut by the three major commercial television networks. In the skyboxes alongside the perennial news organizations, were Internet correspondents. Nearly one thousand news organizations reporting on their websites, as well as thirty-five others that exist solely on the Internet were set up in what came to be known as Internet Alley (T. Smith NewsHour).

Congressional Digest notes this may be the “first real ‘Internet convention’ in that there were countless websites devoted to the week’s events, maintained by the media, the parties, the candidates, and other organizations with a stake in the outcome” (229). According to the technology magazine eWeek, the “8,000 telephone lines, 2,000 ISDN lines, 6,600 miles of fiber-optic cable, 500 digital subscriber line cables, 47 miles of coaxial cable, 950 miles of telephone cables, and 30 megawatts of power capacity,”
created a scene that “was a cross between a high-tech trade show and a NASA control center” (Koblentz 22).

Even with all the praises heaped upon technology, substantial literature exists that paints a negative picture of media and its potentially harmful effects. This is evident in the title of C. John Sommerville’s book: How the News Makes Us Dumb: The Death of Wisdom in an Information Society. One does not need to search long to find other works expressing this same sentiment. The main criticism is not directed at the actual technology (radio, television, Internet), it is the use or manipulation of the media (gate keeping, agenda setting) that concerns critics. Under such circumstances, only episodic events receive special attention and the issues covered are “issues de jour—gun registration today, the Middle East tomorrow—because the media have short attention spans and a hearty appetite for novelty” (Hart 14).

Beyond the exhaustion of a perpetual campaign and technological overload, research supports two other phenomena that affect the American political culture. First, public confidence in government and the political process continues to plummet. Joseph Nye Jr. writes that in 1964, seventy-five percent of “the American public said that they trusted the federal government to do the right thing most of the time” (1). By the late 1990s, a meager twenty-five percent exhibited such trust (1). The ballooning size of government, resulting in a greater tax burden on certain populations; the perception of government intruding too much into private life; and the sentiment that government is wasteful and inefficient (Blendon et al.; Nye) are common complaints associated with the American public’s dissatisfaction. Many believe government serves only the interests of a select few. Politics are commonly viewed as “a kind of running con game, an exploitative
exercise intended to benefit those in power at the expense of an increasingly turned-off public” (Denton and Woodward 23). Hollihan asks, “Why should voters believe that their government is working, when during one electoral campaign after another they are barraged with negative messages that emphasize the failing of their political institutions and elected officials?” (180).

A pronounced decrease in party allegiance that creates a large population of independent voters is another noted phenomenon. Hollihan notes that political parties were important early in America’s history because the “electorate was composed of large numbers of voters who were not politically sophisticated. Many voters were poorly educated and lived in areas where there was little access to political information. In many cases, voters were recent immigrants to the United States who did not have experience with democratic governance in their native countries” (25). Nye notes the current trend is more party dealignment than realignment, as one party is not replacing another “as much as voters moving toward independent status” (1997 16). Election studies show that beginning in the mid-1960’s, “fewer and fewer voters identify themselves as Republicans or Democrats, while more and more call themselves Independents” (Trent and Friedenberg 6).

Researchers argue the proliferation of primaries contributes to the decline of the power and influence of political parties, which also contributes to the changing face of nominating conventions (Trent and Friedenberg). The role of political parties is changing, as Independents comprise “more than one-third of the U.S. electorate” (Hart 14). Hart states that parties “give birth to the candidates, or at least most of them, but they no longer discipline them” (14). Hollihan identifies “citizen activist groups and
special interest lobbies” as having increased power to influence and “secure the
nomination and even the election of candidates favorable to their interests” (32). Civil
rights, feminism, divorce, abortion, gay rights, tax relief, declining family values, and
bureaucracy are just of few of the recurrent campaign issues battled over each election
and more voters are casting their ballots based on the candidate’s stance on these issues,
not party affiliation (Pitts “Context” 80). Hart argues that the influence of media (media-
centered campaigns) results in “split-ticketing” as voters rely on the media, not party affiliation “for information and guidance” (14).

This brief study of America’s political situation does not reveal many bright spots, which triggers the question whether any practical solutions to the problems created through and perpetuated by forty years of political wrangling exist. One positive feature research identifies in recent presidential campaigns is a willingness for conservatives to make “gestures in the liberals’ direction” on such issues as the environment and education (Blankenship et al. 1021). Blankenship et al. studied the 1996 national party conventions in terms of the gender gap, noting that both parties realize the need to court the women’s vote. In 1996, the awareness of the two major parties regarding the public’s disintegrating political ties contributed to this newfound willingness to compromise. It was necessary for self-preservation. This is an important factor to keep in mind in assessing how the 2000 Republican National Convention unfolded.

A second positive feature is that despite identity politics generated from differences on issues like affirmative action, gay rights, or abortion, voters share a fundamental regard for the basic values so long associated with America and the American Dream. Recall the observation of Sillars and Gronbeck that values are a general conception of
what is good or desirable. In American society, sets of values exist that reveal
“something about how American society views itself” and “what is important” (188).
The electorate continues to “hold with our republican forebears that there was such a
thing as ‘the public good’” (Dionne 332).

The public is tired of incessant fighting over the same issues with no candidate
interested enough in solutions to make bi-partisan concessions. We see this same view
from Colin Powell in his own political reflections before registering with the Republican
Party. He states:

Neither of the two major parties fits me comfortably in its present state.
[...] I am troubled by the political passion of those on the extreme right
[...] I am disturbed by the class and racial undertones beneath the surface
of their rhetoric. On the other side of the spectrum, I am put off by the
patronizing liberals who claim to know what is best for society but devote
little thought to who will eventually pay the bills. [...] and I am
discovering that many Americans feel just as I do. (592)

Technology may also contribute to decreasing voter turnout in that the electorate is
unable to relate to the campaign the media produces. These media-produced campaigns
seem to have nothing to do with the issues important to voters (Hart). In order to combat
the separation between politics and the voter, party members occupying important roles
at the national convention, who receive media attention, must be selected to optimize the
impact of the party on the electorate.

In Why Americans Hate Politics, E. J. Dionne calls attention to the need for some
type of change that would result in a different political atmosphere, one that would tie
“citizens back into public life, not to turn them off even more. Above all, we need to end the phony polarization around the issues of the 1960s that serve only to carry us even further from a deliberative, democratic public life” (18). He concludes that:

Talk of citizenship and civic virtue sounds utopian. In fact, it is the essence of practical politics. Only by restoring our sense of common citizenship can we hope to deal with the most profound—and practical issues before us: How to balance rights and responsibilities; how to create a welfare state that is both compassionate and conducive to the deeply held American values of self-reliance and personal accountability; how to pay for the size of government we want; how to restore dialogue and friendship among the races; how to promote strong families while respecting the rights of those who live outside traditional family structures; how to use government—notable the educational system and the state’s proven capacity to promote research and development—to restore America’s economic competitiveness. (333–334)

This is no short order. By the 1990s, Americans were seeking solutions in “a politics that restores a sense of public enterprise and mutual obligation” and that balances public interest with private virtue (Dionne 334). The image the Republican Party was nurturing for the 2000 presidential election appeared to acknowledge many of the problems research identifies.

An examination of the situation framing the actual event of the Republican’s 2000 National Convention leading up to the opening night’s keynote address is necessary to understand fully General Colin Powell’s task in constructing an appropriate and effective...
keynote address. This examination includes a relevant explanation of Lloyd Bitzer's theory of rhetorical situation as it relates to the identification and significance of the Republican platform, the multiple audiences, and the media anticipation of the event.

The Rhetorical Situation

What is a rhetorical situation? Answering this question, Lloyd Bitzer argues, “the presence of rhetorical discourse obviously indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation” (1968 2). He seeks an understanding of “the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse: How should they be described? What are their characteristics? Why and how do they result in the creation of rhetoric?” (1). He asserts that “no major theorist has treated rhetorical situation thoroughly as a distinct subject in rhetorical theory,” even though some rhetoricians discuss it indirectly (1968 2).

Bitzer begins to formalize his notion by explaining what the phrase “rhetoric is situational” does not mean. First, it does not mean that “understanding a speech hinges upon understanding the context of meaning in which the speech is located” (3). Second, it does not mean that “rhetoric occurs in a setting which involves interaction of speaker, audience, subject, and communicative purpose” (3). Third, it is not equitable to a “persuasive situation, which exists whenever an audience can be changed in belief or action by means of speech” (3). Finally, it does not mean that “a rhetorical discourse must be embedded in historic context” as a “living tree must be rooted in soil” (3). Bitzer argues that discourse obtains “its character-as-rhetorical from the situation which generates it” (3). According to Bitzer, situation influences the creation of discourse in that it “is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it
functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality” (3-4). Or as the case with political communication, it may function as a mode of reinforcing a particular reality as well.

Bitzer writes:

[R]hetorical forms are born and a special vocabulary, grammar and style are established. This is true also of the situation which invites the inaugural address of a President. The situation recurs and, because we experience situations and the rhetorical responses to them, a form of discourse is not only established but comes to have a power of its own—the tradition itself tends to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form. (1968 13)

Through the study of rhetoric over the centuries, scholars have recognized that similar acts of discourse are generated by recurrent situations. Such situations include eulogies, speeches of apologia, and campaign rhetoric. Chapter 2 reveals that changes in the campaign process, specifically the national party convention, have limited the rhetorical opportunities within the campaign. The few remaining opportunities include the acceptance speech; the inaugural address; and the keynote address. Bitzer notes that recurrent events produce a specific and familiar style, grammar, and vocabulary that the audience can expect with a significant amount of certainty (1968). The earlier literature review identified specific and familiar characteristics of note in the keynote address, best categorized by Benoit et al.’s terms: acclaiming; attacking; and defending. From one critical perspective, political discourse is identified by and through generic characteristics.
Edwin Black’s *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* is credited as first establishing a generic approach to speech analysis. According to Black:

A generic perspective presumes: 1) there is a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself; 2) there is a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type; 3) the recurrence of a given situational type through history will provide the critic with information on the rhetorical responses available in that situation; and 4) although we can expect congregations of rhetorical discourses to form at distinct points along the scale, these points will be more or less arbitrary. (133-4)

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson claim a genre is “composed of a constellation of recognizable forms bound together by an internal dynamic,” and that “a genre is given its character by a fusion of forms not by its individual elements” (418). Herbert Simons and Aram Aghazarian comment that it is due to the “recurrence of situations—their typicality—that rhetorical practices recur, are emulated, and sometimes become conventionalized. This happens, not just in academic environs, but also, and perhaps most characteristically, in political settings” (5). The literature on campaign rhetoric and specifically that of the keynote address delivered at national party conventions identifies such recurrent and expected characteristics (Blankenship et al.; Murphy and Burkholder).

As noted in Chapter 1, the speaker is critical to achieving the functional success of the keynote address, and over the years personality has become much more important. Bitzer’s theory recognizes the speaker as primary to a rhetorical situation. Without the

49
appropriate speaker to create the discourse, there would be no potential to alter reality. The speaker brings “into existence a discourse of such a character that the audience is so engaged that it becomes mediator of change” (Bitzer 1968 4). The 2000 Republican National Convention functioned as a rhetorical situation influencing the creation of pragmatic discourse (Colin Powell’s keynote address) that would ultimately produce action (re-election of the incumbent) or change (election of a new president) in the world. The Republican Party acknowledged Powell’s importance when its presidential nominee introduced him. Governor Bush’s introduction affirmed Powell’s appropriateness as keynote speaker. Governor Bush stated:

General Powell is working to open the door of opportunity to every child in America [. . .] He’s rallying a new set of troops [. . .] General Powell served as Ronald Reagan’s national security adviser and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President George Bush. And I hope his greatest service to America might still lie ahead. (Bush 1-2)^

By recalling Republican pride felt for the Reagan administration’s and America’s success in the Persian Gulf War, Bush validated Powell’s persona, his ability to function as a mediator of change, and his legitimacy as keynote speaker. In creating the appropriate message for the rhetorical situation, Powell needed to construct a message that served an established and intended political purpose. Miller and Gronbeck state:

political messages are not only explicitly articulated but also are communicated indirectly, in the act of communicating itself. In choosing to say x to audience y rather than audience z, at time 1 rather than time 2, in context A rather than context B, message makers convey an indirect or

^ Parenthetical citations are paragraph numbers added to electronic sources for clarification.
secondary message by communicating one set of circumstances rather than another. (262)

In 2000, Powell faced a challenge similar to that of Daniel Evans in 1968, wherein the Party adopted different philosophies on polarizing issues. He needed to engage and excite the compassionate members of the audience while not offending the conservative side. Governor Bush enjoyed overwhelming support (in excess of 90 percent) from the Republican faithful; therefore, Powell’s endorsement was essential to secure swing and moderate voters. Powell faced the challenge of selling the new Republican political mind-set of compassionate conservatism to his audience. This might not be easy to accomplish considering the state of mind of the American electorate established in the Review of Literature.

Constituents: Exigence; Audience; and Constraints

Within a rhetorical situation, three constituents exist “prior to the creation and presentation of discourse” (Bitzer 1968 6). These are: 1) exigence; 2) audience; 3) and constraints. An exigence is “an imperfection marked by urgency [...] a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (1968 6). Every rhetorical situation has “at least one controlling exigence” that serves “as the organizing principle” that “specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected” (Bitzer 1968 7).

The 2000 presidential election was one of only a few close elections in the last century (T. Smith NewsHour) and the two major political parties had much riding on the outcome. A Democratic president had occupied the White House since 1992, and the Republicans had enjoyed control of Congress since 1994 (Congressional Digest 225).
Thomas E. Mann, a leading authority on the U.S. election process, called 2000 a “very high-stakes election’ with the presidency, control of the House and Senate, and control of state legislatures that will redraw congressional and state legislative district lines after the 2000 census” (6) up for grabs. He also noted that “assuming some current justices retire,” several seats on the Supreme Court could be at stake as well (Mann 6). In this election, the candidates were “talking about the issues” and its outcome “could result in a shift in the Supreme Court” (T. Smith NewsHour).

It is worthwhile to note at this time that not all exigences function as rhetorical. Only those “capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse” are rhetorical (7). Powell’s keynote address is in that it is capable of positive modification through discourse. The exigence requiring positive modification is Democratic control of the White House. According to the Republican Party’s perspective, a Democratic president is an imperfection, marked by the urgency of the election, requiring correction. In order to achieve the necessary means of modification, discourse must be produced that will result in the election of George W. Bush to the presidency.

The second constituent is audience. Thomas Mann identifies the groupings of older voters (generational), women (gender), the middle-class (class), and racial groups (race) as key factors to the outcome of the 2000 presidential election. According to Bitzer, the audience is not “a body of mere hearers or readers” (1968 8). It consists only of “those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (8). The audience must be able to enact the positive modifications required by the exigence. Overcoming this constituent is difficult for Powell because he faces several
audiences, all of which have the ability to affect the outcome of the election. In 2000, Americans were “feeling good about the direction the country [was] moving” and about “their own personal finances” (Mann 7). They were experiencing economic prosperity due to a sustained period of “consistently low unemployment and inflation, long-term economic expansion, and budget surpluses projected to be over $3 trillion over 10 years” (Congressional Digest 225). Adding to the optimism was the fact that “real wages for low- and middle-income voters [were], finally, moving up” (Mann 7). Americans were not looking for a President to change the direction of the economy; they were looking for one who would be “about both continuity and change” (Congressional Digest 225). In a later work, Bitzer defines audience as “a class of persons whose cognitive and affective states and whose habits of thought and language must be understood by a communicator who would inform or persuade effectively” (1978 68). With this in mind, Powell not only faced multiple audiences capable of positive modification, he had to understand their “habits of thought and language” in order to meet his challenge.

When considering the factor of race in politics, “studies show that minority groups exercise a high level of solidarity in casting their ballots” (Plano and Greenberg 96). Mann asserts that “Republicans will make little headway with African Americans this election; Democrats will hold 90 percent. Hispanics [were] a target group for Governor Bush” (12-13). Research supports Mann’s opinion regarding the African American vote. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, “the nation’s leading think tank on African American issues” (Pitts “Context” 89), most African Americans supported Gore because of their satisfaction with the incumbent Democratic president. The Center’s research reported that “in both 1998 and 1999, for the first time ever, more
blacks than whites indicated they were financially better off than the previous year” (Pitts “Context” 89). In 2000, much of the African American vote was satisfied with the economy and continued its support for the Democratic Party. In addition, the disproportionate representation of blacks in the lower economic strata and the perception of racism as a continuing problem helped maintain black American support for the liberal platform of the Democratic Party (Pitts “Context” 89).

In contrast, the Hispanic vote tended to be much more fluid, making it a focal point of the 2000 election. Hispanics are “more diverse in their party affiliation and voting behavior” (Pitts “Context” 94). The Republican Party was acutely aware of its “perceived insensitivity” (Pitts “Context” 95) toward minorities. As a result, the Party courted both African Americans and Hispanics in the 2000 campaign, although the Party realized there was more to be gained in the short-term through the Hispanic vote. This Hispanic vote is also important politically since as a group, it is “increasing at a faster rate” and by “early in the twenty-first century, will likely pass blacks in potential voting strength” (Plano and Greenberg 96).

The third constituent is constraints. Bitzer identifies these as the “persons, events, objects, and relations” that have “the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence” (1968 8). Just as there are several key election factors, there are several recurrent key election issues evident at the 2000 Republican Convention that function as constraints. According to Plano and Greenberg, key election issues are “controversial solutions to public policy problems offered by rival candidates in election campaigns. […] They are matters over which reasonable—and sometimes unreasonable—people in the body politic can and do disagree” (96). These include the
role of government, family values/valuing families, and inclusivity/diversity (Blankenship et al. 1026-1031). Not surprisingly, the two major parties handle each differently, though 1996 marked an initial blurring of many partisan issues.

Although Bitzer’s notion of situation guides the analysis of General Powell’s keynote address, it is important to note other rhetorical critics take issue with it. Marilyn Young contends that “few contributions to rhetorical theory have generated as much controversy over such a sustained period as has Lloyd Bitzer’s conception of the rhetorical situation” (275). Richard E. Vatz and Scott Consigny were first to publish responses to “The Rhetorical Situation.” More recently, William L. Benoit suggests applying Kenneth Burke’s notion of scene to the construct, and Craig Smith and Scott Lybarger offer a reconstruction of the model that “presents a more fluid notion of exigence(s)” (Young 197). A common point of contention with Bitzer’s theory is its focus on the situation commanding the creation and delivery of rhetoric. Critics argue that the rhetor initiates and controls the birth of discourse. The point they overlook, or misinterpret, is Bitzer’s claim that situation generates out of recurrent discourse that possess recurrent expectations. Others, like Jamieson, support the concept of generic classification and Bitzer’s “contention that rhetorical forms are prompted by comparable responses to comparable situations” (1973 163). She expresses concern about discourse occurring in situations that “had not previously occurred” and suggests that the “perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows not merely from the situation but also from antecedent rhetorical forms” (163). Again, this argument disregards the importance of the recurrent situation and its established expectations.
By the time the 2000 national conventions occurred, education, prescription drug affordability, Social Security, and taxes were the issues occupying the forefront in the campaign (Congressional Digest 225). Each party would incorporate its stance on these, as well as other political issues, into its platform and its convention rhetoric; therefore, the Republican Platform and Governor Bush's agenda presented a number of constraints with which Powell had to cope in his discourse.

The Republican Platform

Though the presidential nominee is not bound to the party platform, it offers insight into what each party stands for and offers a reliable guide as to the direction they may try to head the nation (Gorin; Mann). The 2000 Republican Party Platform begins:

We meet at a remarkable time in the life of our country. Our powerful economy gives America a unique chance to confront persistent challenges. Our country, after an era of drift, must now set itself to important tasks and higher goals. The Republican Party has the vision and leadership to address these issues. The highest hopes of the American people—a world at peace, scientific progress, a just and caring society—cannot be achieved by prosperity alone, but neither can they be fulfilled without it. (Congressional Digest 239)

This statement reaffirms Mann's observations regarding the state of America and the state-of-mind of the electorate. Economic prosperity allows for renewed focus on political issues that may otherwise be secondary or tertiary during times of economic
depression. Out of this perspective, the Republican Party adopted “Renewing America’s Promise. Together” as its theme for 2000.

A goal of the platform committee was to “prevent the ideological battles between conservatives and moderates [...] that damaged the party’s chances in the 1992 and 1996 elections” (Gorin 47). Preventing such battles was important for the committee to consider, but even more so was creating compassionate conservatism as the new face of the Republican Party. GOP Platform Committee Chairperson Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, found the document “very uplifting, very visionary, very progressive, and one that really tries to solve societal problems, and one which really puts the flesh on compassionate conservatism, which George Bush talks about” (2000). Conservatives agreed to yield ground toward the center on the issues of “immigration, education, and women’s health,” in exchange for continued inclusion of verbiage calling for a constitutional ban on abortion and requiring judges to make their views known “prior to being appointed to the bench” (Gorin 47).

Governor Thompson noted that “Governor Bush wanted to leave the plank just the way it was in ’96, even though he has indicated he has some exceptions to what that platform is all about” (2000). The concessions agreed to by conservative party members, along with the campaign issues championed by Governor Bush, manifested significant shifts in ideology from those contained in previous Republican party platforms. On opening night of the convention, CNN floor correspondent Frank Sesno commented, “much is being glossed over here in the interest of unity” (“CNN Live Event”). David Pitts, contributing editor for the U.S. Department of State International Information Programs, noted that television networks “aggressively reported the new style Republican
Convention and [...] compassionate conservatism. But there was little mention of conservatism and much talk of compassion” (“New Style” 2000).

On education, Governor Thompson said the plank had a “brand new tone”—one that was “very uplifting, very positive and exciting” to reflect the tremendous job George Bush had done in Texas “especially with minority students—African-Americans and Hispanics” (2000). Specific aspects of the education plank included giving every child access to “a high-quality, indeed, a world-class education” through improved teacher training and recruitment; choices in education; and “the return of voluntary school prayer” (Congressional Digest 241). On opening night of the Convention, keynote speaker General Colin Powell focused much of his speech on these and other issues associated with educating America’s children.

The tone created by the Republican Party in 2000 differed from those it traditionally adopted. The reasoning for this was clear from the beginning moments of the Convention. Governor Thompson proclaimed “the Republican Party of yesteryear is taking a page from the new decade, the new millennium, and we’re moving in a new direction, a direction of togetherness, a direction of restoring our prosperity, our ability to make America stronger and better tomorrow, and we’re doing it together” (2000). Also absent from the platform was any denunciation “of the Clinton-Gore administration and critiques of liberal initiatives” (Gorin Campaign 2000). Despite some skepticism that the platform did not match the Party’s ideals, most delegates enthusiastically supported it.

New York Congressman Peter King stated that “over the past few years [the Party] has gotten away from the traditional Republican conservative values. [...] but I think that [it] is genuine selling of the Republican position, and we’re doing it in a way that the
average person can understand" ("New GOP” NewsHour). And former director of the Christian Coalition, Ralph Reed claimed:

We allowed for too long issues that were critical to our country like education, health care, and the environment, to be conceded to the other party. That was a mistake; we’re not going to do it anymore. Now, we’re going to have different views than them. Our agenda for those issues is very different than the Democrats. But we’re going to make our views known, and we’re going to make it a priority. ("New GOP” NewsHour)

The two major parties thus faced a problematic situation. They were less solidified and enjoyed less influence than ever before, so even if the campaign desired to break Dionne’s cycle, it could ill afford to upset any constituency. The Democratic and Republican Parties had “become so unstable that neither side can afford to risk very much” (Dionne 17). It was no longer effective to appeal to voters as members of either the Republican or Democratic Party. They were instead “studied and appealed to as an individual” (Dionne 17).

In 2000, group membership had decreased dramatically, divorce was on the rise, the family was declining, public education was in disrepair, and youth violence was increasing. The American electorate was exceptionally cynical, disconnected, and out-of-sync with government and politics. By the time Colin Powell came to address the Republican National Convention, he faced multiple, heterogeneous audiences within the rhetorical situation. Powell needed to address the traditional, conservative Republicans while supporting Governor Bush’s agenda of compassionate conservatism. He needed to address the moderate Republican, the Independent, and the swing voter. He needed to
address those skeptical of his association with the Republican Party. Finally, he needed to address the American public.

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the American electorate finds few positives in the modern political campaign. A recent willingness to compromise and a continued respect for commonly held American values were two positive rhetorical characteristics identified. Lloyd Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation is useful in identifying the exigences, audience, and constraints that influenced Colin Powell’s keynote address. Chapter 4 uses a transcript of the speech to explicate an understanding of Powell’s rhetoric within the rhetorical situation that included an apathetic, disgruntled, and disassociated electorate. Powell’s challenge is to deliver a speech that appeals to a variety of audiences. He accomplishes this by rejecting the established expectations for a keynote address and uses the American Dream to regenerate the electorate’s faith in the possibility for non-partisan politics.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

According to Campbell and Burkholder, “rhetorical criticism involves the description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of persuasive uses of language” (15). This statement represents the different stages performed during rhetorical criticism. The resulting piece of criticism increases “the capacity of readers to appreciate rhetorical discourses and enables general audiences to make informed and deliberative judgments based on persuasive appeals” (15).

In applying the critical process to Colin Powell’s 2000 keynote address, three primary challenges to be addressed through the discourse were discovered. Powell faced the challenges of: 1) persuading conservative Republicans to adopt the idea of compassionate conservatism, 2) persuading independent and swing voters that the Republican Party was ready to move beyond partisan politics to face divisive issues, and 3) persuading a disgruntled American electorate that the Republican Party was genuinely interested in becoming a big, inclusive tent. Overcoming these challenges is a daunting task for one piece of discourse. I argue that Powell recognized the existence of a unique culture shaped by changes in the political environment previously discussed. This culture consisted of multiple and diverse populations within the American electorate that would not be persuaded by the rhetoric of the traditional generic keynote address. By remaining
true to his rhetorical style, Powell utilized familiar, value-laden language to overcome the difficulties inherent in this rhetorical situation.

Values and the American Value System

Malcolm Sillars and Bruce Gronbeck state that “rarely do we see a text dominated by only two or three salient values, and it is virtually impossible to find one built upon only one value. Most often a critic will identify a system of values.” They add that “such systems is possible because a limited number of values” can be found within a specific group (190). Critics perform value analysis on discourse to “understand the cultural bases and orientation to social and material conditions embodied within it” (186). The language in the text is produced from the shared understanding of the components of the value system (Sillars and Gronbeck).

According to Bitzer’s theory of rhetorical situation, the Republican National Convention, the delegates, the media, the American electorate, and Colin Powell function as various constituents. These constituents, when associated with values that Sillars and Gronbeck refer to as “bases for expression of preferences” (186), represent a culture, which in turn “represents the beliefs, attitudes, values, myths, ideologies, routines, and other behaviors that define a people and their relationships to others” (201). Sillars and Gronbeck write, “few would deny that valuing is a central part of our lives,” as for humans, we make sense of our world “by identifying values with it” (188). Vanessa Beasley adds that ideals and beliefs “do not simply fall from the sky, […] they are a product of human interaction” (174).

---

6 For the purpose of this analysis, other terms such as beliefs, ideals, ideas correspond to the definition of values established by Sillars and Gronbeck.
Speakers who incorporate value statements into discourse persuade their audiences by expressing “judgment about what is the preferred end state or means of action” (Sillars and Gronbeck 186). Value statements can be either positive or negative, and “how a society defines its values negatively is as important as how they are stated positively” (192). Examples of positive and negative value statements include: “life-death, freedom-slavery, saving-waste, peace-war, work-laziness, and so on” (Sillars and Gronbeck 192).

Powell’s preferred end state, or means of action evident in his keynote address is revealed in this brief statement: “So with all the success we have enjoyed and with all the wealth we have created, we have much more work to do and a long way to go to bring the promise of America to every single American” (Keynote 11). This phrase reveals many of the key components to the value system referred to as the American Dream. Knowing that Powell often contrasts problems with solutions, this statement reveals the potential for positive and negative value statements in his keynote address. Sillars and Gronbeck state that in communication, values are more often implicit. Conversely, Powell’s rhetoric, being keenly aware of the audience and the occasion, creates explicit references through history, personal experience, and traditional American values (Leeman 286-287).

In her examination of presidential inaugurals, Beasley notes that “although most modern nations presumably have their own distinct ideals and philosophical traditions, some observers have suggested that the case of the United States is fundamentally different” (170). Beasley classifies these fundamental differences with what she terms “the shared beliefs hypothesis” (171). She notes that proponents of this hypothesis “classify American national identity as a distinctly mental proposition, emanating from

---

<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that other countries do not have similar beliefs and/or values, but purpose of this analysis, I focus on those associated with and accepted as part of what is commonly known as the American Dream.
the ancestral mind into an ephemeral but enduring national consciousness” and “associate
the stability of American democracy with the extent to which some ideological
consciousness is in fact shared among the American people” (171-172). An
understanding of a shared American value system is beneficial for understanding how
recurrent a rhetorical situation, such as the keynote address, comes into existence.

Sillars and Gronbeck identify “six touchstone value systems” that represent “those
generally found in American and Western society”: 1) Puritan-Pioneer, 2) Enlightenment,
They warn that “these touchstone value systems do not constitute a natural standard
against which to judge a text, but they do indicate central tendencies” (195). Each
classification offers common positive and negative values and contains some overlap.

Walter Fisher’s explanation of the American Dream is used to identify specific values in
General Powell’s discourse, as it incorporates elements of all six touchstone systems.

Fisher observes, “the American Dream is two dreams,” the materialistic and
moralistic, “that we all share in some degree or other and which, when taken together
characterize America as a culture” (160). He continues, “without dreams or myths, a
man [sic] or nation is without a past, present, or future” (161). Fisher states that:

Although the American Dream is two [dreams] and a person may
exemplify or strongly prefer one over the other, it is important to
recognize that no American can entirely escape the whole dream [. . . ]
When one [dream] tends to dominate, whether in the culture or in an

---

8 Fisher argues that the two American Dreams are actually two myths. For sake of clarity, the two
categories will be referred to as dreams.
individual, the other [dream] is always hauntingly there in the background
[...]. Both are based on traditional American values. (163)

The materialistic dream is “grounded in the puritan work ethic and relates to the
values of effort, persistence, ‘playing the game,’ initiative, self-reliance, achievement,
and success” (Fisher 161). The rewards of status, wealth, and power are earned by
employing “one’s energies and talents to the fullest” (161). It represents aspects of the
Puritan-Pioneer, the Personal Success, the Enlightenment, and the Progressive touchstone
systems. The moralistic dream involves “the values of tolerance, charity, compassion,
and true regard for the dignity and worth of each and every individual” (Fisher 161). The
touchstone systems evident in it are the Transcendental and the Collectivist. Fisher’s two
definitions and Sillars and Gronbeck’s touchstone American value systems name the
same traditional values Leeman argues are central to Powell’s discourse: “hard work,
determination, confidence, family, and America” (289) and so on.

Leeman notes characteristics common in African-American oratory that reflect the
moralistic dream including: “the quest for freedom and equality of treatment” (xviii).
Powell’s discourse calls on American values such as hard work, education, equality, and
justice. At the 1996 Republican convention, he stated that his parents taught him “that
hard work and education were the keys to success in this country [...]. We might be
considered poor, but we were rich in spirit. We might be black and treated as second-
class citizens. But, stick with it, because in America, justice will eventually triumph and
the powerful, searing promise of the founding fathers will come true” (Powell 1996). In
2000, Powell claimed that the American Dream was “a dream that I have been privileged
to live” (5). In order to overcome the rhetorical challenges, Powell had to do as Bitzer
advises and engage his audience to the point “that it becomes mediator of change” (1968 4). Powell achieved this by using the common values shared by his audience.

Language that signifies values specifically associated with the American Dream is woven into America’s political fabric. Sillars and Gronbeck note, “in U.S. society there is no document that means more in the definition of our cultural (especially political) values than the Declaration of Independence. It is ‘just words,’ but those words are vital.” Values in this document include “Truth, Equality, Creation, Rights, Life, Liberty, and Happiness” (Sillars and Gronbeck 188). These words find their way into the entire election process and function as powerful rhetorical tools. An example of this is found at the beginning of Powell’s speech, where he referenced the Constitution and the important role Philadelphia plays in our country’s history:

I've seen people hard at work providing for their families, giving of themselves, taking care of each other. I've seen them creating wealth for the nation. I've seen an economy transforming itself to seize the promise of the information revolution.

I've met so many of our fellow citizens who believe in America to the depths of their heart and who are doing everything they can in their communities to make our nation that more perfect union spoken of in our Constitution.

I've been moved yet again to stand in awe of the American dream, which was given birth in this city over 200 years ago, a dream that I have been privileged to live. (“Keynote” 3-5)
Powell embraced the image of the American Dream and the passion and emotion commonly associated with it with his words. Roderick Hart writes, “by choosing one word a speaker decides not to use another, thereby creating a sociolinguistic map that can be read” (24). But, Powell’s word choice created an unexpected sociolinguistic map considering the rhetorical situation created around the keynote address. A traditional characteristic of the keynote address is to prove one candidate, or party, more worthy than the other, but by incorporating core American values, Powell attempted to bridge the differences between Republicans and Democrats instead of further dividing the two.

He constructed discourse that did not isolate the message to those inside the convention hall or in the Republican Party. In 1984, Mario Cuomo’s goal was to promote “a vision of the American body politic as a ‘family.’” He formed this vision by distinguishing the Democrats from the Republicans (Henry 112-114). Henry writes that “Cuomo aimed to raise doubts about the accuracy of […] America as a ‘shining city on a hill’” (112) in order to alter audience perceptions of the Republican vision of America. Cuomo then “built the remainder of his anti-administration appeal on the foundation of the two-cities theme, as he proceeded through a series of paired consequences he described as inevitable results of Reagan programs” (113). In contrast, Powell used the same technique of contrasting pairs of positive and negative realities that he witnessed in traveling across America. Powell told his audience about all “that is so good and right in America” (“Keynote” 7) including the hard-working people taking care of their families, the people “creating wealth for the nation,” (3) and the “people who believe in the dream” (6). He then revealed those things that “we cannot ignore,” including poverty, failing communities, and “people who’ve lost hope” (8).
Powell used negative value statements in contrast with positive to describe the condition of America’s schools. He claimed that “education is the key to breaking that cycle of poverty and failure,” negative values that deny the American Dream. He added that “many of our public schools are doing a fine job preparing our youngsters” and that “you’ve never seen better facilities, you’ve never seen more dedicated teachers, you’ve never seen more involved parents” (26). Contrary to expectations, Powell did not blame the failing schools “trapped in fossilized bureaucracies” (26) on the Democrats. In fact, the word Democrat did not appear in this discourse.

We know that in his discourse, Powell often reveals problems and then provides solutions. His keynote address was no exception. Powell laid out the problems of education and then provided his audience with viable solutions. Consistent with the keynote address genre, solutions are generated through praise of the candidate. Powell detailed how Governor Bush was prepared to face two prominent problems America faced: education and race relations. He stated: “And tonight we focus on education, the keystone to it all. Governor Bush has rightly made children and education the centerpiece of his campaign for president. You heard him say it earlier, we can’t leave any child behind” (“Keynote” 24). Governor Bush’s potential to solve issues of education were evidenced through his accomplishments in Texas: “he ended social promotions for kids. He increased state funding by $8 billion. He put new textbooks in every school in the state of Texas. He strengthened standardized testing in all Texas public schools. He insisted on teacher competency, and he expanded the charter school movement” (“Keynote” 30-31).
Even though Powell praised the Republican nominee and his ability to solve problems, he did not assert that the Republican Party would be solely responsible for change. To make his message effective, Powell made all Americans responsible for change. He stated that in order “to deliver on that promise, we must begin with our children. So many of the problems we worry about go back to how we raised our children. [. . .] Our children are not the problem. They are our future. They are America’s promise. The problem is us, if we fail to give them what they need to be successful in life” (“Keynote” 12-14).

Powell made direct reference to his party only ten times in the discourse using the words Republican, Republican Party, or Party. Two references came in his opening statement: “Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Republicans, it’s a wonderful evening here tonight. [...] And I am deeply honored to again have the privilege of addressing a Republican National Convention” (1). Most of the party references occurred when Powell addressed racial divides in America:

[Governor Bush] wants the Republican Party to wear [the mantle of Lincoln] again (35);

The party must follow the governor’s lead in reaching out to minority communities (36);

The party must listen to and speak with all leaders of the black community (36); and

...some in our party miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education. (37)
Powell’s final references to the Republican Party maintain the tone of unity and inclusivity created in the body of the speech, in that he pairs his party with all Americans: “And if we give [all minorities] that choice, it will be good for our party. But above all, it will be good for America” (38). And he closed his speech: “For all our children’s sake, above all, let us as a party strive from this moment on to make that century a reality. Fellow Republicans, fellow Americans, let’s elect George W. Bush and Dick Cheney” (48).

Powell acknowledged that despite the strides made over the last forty years, “the issue of race still casts a shadow over our society” (“Keynote” 10). Here again Powell’s style of contrasting the negative with the positive is evident. He detailed a second major problem and provided solutions offered through Governor Bush’s leadership. He encouraged the Republican Party to return to our founding fathers’ promise by promoting inclusion. He urged them to “follow [Governor Bush’s] lead in reaching out to minority communities and particularly the African-American community—not just during an election year campaign” (Powell “Keynote” 36). Powell cited Bush’s success in Texas “on bringing more and more minorities into the tent by responding to their deepest needs” (34). Powell showed confidence in Bush’s ability when he stated, “I know he can help bridge our racial divides. […] He also spoke the truth to the delegates when he said that ‘the party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln.’ I talked with him again today and I know that with all his heart, Governor Bush welcomes the challenge” (35). By creating a theme of inclusivity, Powell was able to establish Governor Bush’s concern for minority groups, which played a central role in the 2000 election:
Governor Bush has reached out to all Texans—white, black, Latino, Asian, Native American. He has been successful in bringing more and more minorities into the tent by responding to their deepest needs. Some call it compassionate conservatism. To me, it's just caring about people. I believe he can do the same thing as president. I am convinced he will bring to the White House that same passion for inclusion. I know that he can help bridge our racial divides. I know that. (34-35)

He stressed that greater inclusion would not only be good for the Republican Party, but above all, it will be good for America:

Good for America—that must be the measure for all that we do. I believe that's the measure that Governor Bush will use to guide his actions as president. Whether it's economic policy or military strategy or seeing what we can do to make our American family more inclusive, he will always try to do that which is good and right for America. (39)

Both Powell's 1996 and 2000 convention speeches showed a willingness to reflect candidly on the attitude of the black community toward the Republican Party. He informed the delegates that:

We must understand the cynicism that exists in the black community. The kind of cynicism that is created when, for example, some in our party miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand Black kids get an education, but you hardly hear a whimper when it's affirmative action for lobbyists who load our federal tax codes with preferences for special interests. ("Keynote" 37)
According to E. J. Dionne, the origins of much of this cynicism can be traced back to the Reagan era where “black America saw […] growing white hostility.” The administration’s “relentless war against affirmative action” was viewed by black America as “a desire to roll back twenty years of black progress” (336).

Powell urged the inclusion of all parts of the “black community, regardless of political affiliation or philosophy” (36). Some critics latched onto this statement suggesting it encouraged his Party, and all Americans to accept Louis Farrakhan and his anti-white and anti-Semitic rhetoric. I would argue that Powell’s reference included Farrakhan, but only because of the importance of including all racial factions to achieve desired effects. Change cannot occur if certain groups continue to be excluded from the conversation. As Dionne notes, the time to curtail the growing polarization between black and white America is growing short due to the wave of pessimism engulfing Black America. Historically, “such pessimism has been accompanied by a rise in black national feeling” (336) which during the 1960s resulted in the black power movement and came to a head in the Watts riots. Today, this sense of nationalism is most evident in Farrakhan’s movement. Continued indifference to black America may result in millions of blacks who, “out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in blacknationalist ideologies—a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare” (King 27). After his speech, Powell said his aim was “to reach out to the African American communities” to let them know that the Republican Party has programs in education, health, and housing that will benefit them (Powell “Interview”). A CNN floor correspondent reported that Charles Evers, brother of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, was one of the few people in his section “to stand up and applaud when General
Powell delivered his very strong remarks on affirmative action.” When asked if other people in the room disagreed with Powell, Evers responded that though there certainly were those who disagreed, they would “absolutely not” say so because “[the Republicans] cannot afford to lose any vote” (“CNN Live Event”).

Powell called on other shared American values when he talked about America’s military strength and station as a world power. Though he barely referred to his service early in the speech, he later incorporated military references to establish his authority on these issues based on his success as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War. By stating “during the almost seven years since I retired from the Army” (3), Powell reminded the audience about his military service. Later, Powell asserted, “[W]e stand at an historic turning point in world history. For the first time […] America does not face an enemy fueled by an ideology claiming to be superior to our beloved system of democracy” (40). The implicit references to America’s recent military success may have functioned to appease conservatives who made concessions on the 2000 Republican Platform. Patriotism is a powerful American value. In the book One Nation, After All, author Alan Wolfe identified three central values embraced by many Americans: “God, family, and country” (Gergen 84). By calling on national pride, he rallied the delegates by stirring the emotions tied to patriotism. In his autobiography, Powell credited a resurgence of pride in and support for a strong and alert military to Ronald Reagan. In his keynote address, Powell added that like Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Governor Bush “will not repeat the mistakes of the past and let our insurance policy, our armed forces, fall into disrepair” (45). This statement represents what may be interpreted as the one negative reference to the Democratic Party in this speech. Powell paid tribute to
Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and the military when he affirmed: “We defeated communism. We defeated fascism. We defeated them on the field of battle, and we defeated them on the field of ideas” (40). In an apparent reference to trouble spots in the Middle East, Powell stated that the “sick nations” still pursuing “tyranny and weapons of mass destruction […] are investing in their own demise as surely as the Soviet Union did by investing in the Red Army” (40).

Trent and Friedenberg write that campaigns stress, “the rightness of what we do and the way we do it” by claiming “this country really is destined to be the mighty keeper of liberty” (4). Powell accomplished this through language. When Powell referenced America as a world power, he changed his word choices from localized terms such as America, American, and family. He incorporated words like nation and world that placed America in a global context:

Today we are the most powerful nation on earth—militarily, economically, by any measure. We are that rarity in history, a trusted nation whose power is tempered by compassion, whose leadership is earned by example and whose foreign affairs will be guided by common interests and common sense.

The world is watching to see if all this power and wealth is just for the well-to-do, the comfortable, the privileged, or are we a nation that can make our dream real for all Americans so that all share in what we have been given by a generous God?

We must show to the rest of the world the beauty and potential of democracy. Our greatest strength is the power of our example to be that
shining city on the hill that Ronald Reagan spoke of and that the whole world looks up to. (41-43).

But Powell’s discourse focused primarily on children and the issues affecting them: broken families, drugs, crime, and inferior educational opportunities. Powell’s application of the American Dream to America’s children is compelling. In America, we teach our children “that if one employs one’s energies and talents to the fullest, one will reap the rewards of status, wealth, and power” (Fisher 161). Powell implied this when he stated he has “met so many young people who believe in the dream. They are on the road to success. They’re being raised in strong families, going to good schools, filling the finest universities, graduating and then going on to find their place and fortune in this blessed land of ours” (6). Though he never made a direct reference to the organization, he stated “our children are not our problem, they are our future. They are America’s promise” (Powell “Keynote” 2000 14). The five promises central to the organization Powell was so active in also represent the materialistic and moralistic American values evident throughout the speech.

Promise 1 provided “ongoing relationships with caring adults—parents, mentors, tutors or coaches” (“Five Promises”). Powell stated that in order for “young people to become contributing citizens and not convicts, then early in life we must give them the character and the confidence they need to succeed” (“Keynote” 17). This begins in the home with “caring, loving parents and family members” and when those families are “not up to the task, the rest of us must step in to help as mentors, tutors, foster parents, [and] friends to kids” (18). He acknowledged that “tens of thousands of our neighbors have
already stepped forward, tens of thousands who realize that our children are a gift from God [...] They belong to us all. We are all responsible for them" (19).

Promise 2 provided children with havens outside school hours that “provide both physical and emotional safety” (“Five Promises”). According to Powell, this is accomplished by providing “a safe place for those kids to learn and to grow, more clubs and after school programs to protect them from the dangers that exist in our society and our streets” (20).

Promise 3 provided children with a healthy start in life including “adequate nutrition, exercise, and health care” (“Five Promises”). He stated, “We are obligated to make sure that every child in America has access to quality health care. We owe them nothing less. It has to be done. It is our responsibility to do that for our children” (20).

Promise 4 ensured that children have necessary and marketable skills in order to transition effectively from school to work. Education was the driving force behind much of this discourse. Powell reported that many of the schools he visited “are doing a fine job preparing our youngsters,” yet at the same time, many others “are failing” (26). If the other promises are fulfilled, “our youngsters will be ready for the schooling that will give them the education needed to win those jobs of the future” (22). They are trapped in “fossilized bureaucracies” with low expectations and standards for children and teachers.

He reminded his audience, first, that if they believed that children truly belong to all of us, “then all of us must be willing to spend more to repair our schools and spend more to pay our teachers better” (Powell “Keynote” 28). Second, he urged openness to new ideas as a key to improving education, which again revealed the problem-solution format. He supported standardized testing for students, testing teacher qualifications, and charter...
schools. He encouraged different options for education "using private scholarship money" and experimenting with school vouchers in order to give poor parents the same choices wealthy parents enjoy (28). Lenora Fulani, who "twice ran for president as an independent" and who is "an activist in the Reform Party," supported Powell's rhetoric, especially on education. In "A Letter to Colin Powell," she noted that Democrats, "in thrall to the antivoucher teachers unions and their tremendous vote-getting capacity, are unable to take the steps that will so obviously benefit poor and minority youth" (11). She continued: "the traditional Democratic Party coalition has become a brake on, not an accelerator for, black progress. The crisis in education is only one example" (11).

Powell ended by calling on "good old American innovation" and "good old American competition" as the ways to "help give our children the best education possible" (29).

Promise 5 provided opportunities to enhance self-esteem, boost confidence and heighten a sense of responsibility to the community through community service. These ideals are most represented by moralistic "values of tolerance, charity, compassion, and true regard for the dignity and worth of each and every individual" (Fisher 161). Powell told the delegates that as necessities were given to our children, we would "ask them to give something back to the community of which they are a part" by teaching them early "the joy that comes from giving to others" ("Keynote" 21). This early education would teach our young people "that through service to others, service to community, they will put virtue in their heart that will make them absolutely beautiful adults when they grow up" (21). He concluded the reference to Promise 5 with "Let our children be part of the solution" (21). When Powell evoked the rhetoric of America's Promise, an organization
generated out of a bi-partisan effort to detail the issues America faced, he made it clear they were America's issues, not those of one or the other party.

The sentiment expressed by the Five Promises was valuable to Powell's speech for three reasons. First, it represented two common themes he championed in his rhetoric: 1) traditional American values such as truth, equality, rights, liberty, and happiness (Leeman; Sillars and Gronbeck), and 2) his commitment to the youth of America. Second, it promoted the issues central to Governor Bush's philosophy regarding education. Third, it affirmed the Republican Party's efforts to appear more compassionate toward issues traditionally championed by the Democratic Party.

Powell's choice of words, the use of repetition, and the frequency of repetition were important to the structure of the speech and effectiveness of his language.

Powell uttered the words *American* and *America* thirty-two times and *nation* nine times. This was quite frequent in contrast to other examples of political discourse. Hart finds that in the acceptance speeches delivered by the two presidential candidates (Bill Clinton and Bob Dole) at the 1996 party conventions, "the candidates referenced America and its variants forty-five times between them" (24). Powell almost surpassed this number in one speech. He referred to *families* ten times. He used the words *promise*, *dream*, and *believe(s)* nineteen times. These terms are peppered throughout the speech and maintained the rhythm of the discourse, but more significantly, they established a shared experience for the audience that was encapsulated by the American Dream.

Powell's use of *America, American, nation/national, and family/families* created an inclusive atmosphere that went beyond the communicative function of bringing the party together. It created the impression of unity for all Americans. As he neared the end of
his speech, Powell declared that in order to continue to be the place the whole world looks up to, “we must all work together. We must reach down, back and across. All of us coming together to show the world what our American family can do. This is the challenge. This is the time” (44). Holloway notes that “voters listen for the cultural assumptions that guide their worldviews [. . .] they can identify fundamental ideas about the world consistent with the structure of social relationships they prefer” (118). Miller and Gronbeck add that voters also contribute to the creation of the images of society: “The public revels in the conception of America as an extended community, a melting pot of diverse interests” (263).

The following day, Powell appeared on Good Morning America with Charlie Gibson. Gibson asked what is going on with Republicans:

This crowd was cheering you when you said you should support affirmative action. This party has rejected it. When you told them they ought to be building more schools and not jails, yet more jails has been a critical part of this party’s anti-crime package. Yet they’re cheering you for advocating positions they have rejected (“Powell and Bush?” abcNews).

In the August 8, 2000 issue of National Review, Jay Nordlinger expressed that the General’s decision “to spank the Republicans on race” was “to the delight of the GOP’s harshest critics” (6-7). Powell chastised those in his party who “miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action” allowing Black children to get an education (“Keynote” 40). Nordlinger stated further that the media focused on the issue of race and “coverage of the convention was almost entirely painted in black and white”

9 Parenthetical citations represent paragraph numbers added for clarity.
(2). He also claimed that the Republicans “desperately, pathetically, wanted to be seen as a party of ‘inclusion’” and that “they peppered the stage with black and Hispanic speakers” (3). Clearly, Nordlinger feels Colin Powell was selected to deliver the Republican’s keynote address because he is a Black American.

William F. Buckley Jr.’s column printed in that same issue of the National Review seemed cynical. He asserted that Powell’s race was “providential”—“a formidable asset of the GOP and indeed the nation” (1). Powell’s presence, along with “an array of speakers and entertainers […] showcased in the opening hours of the Convention,” sent the message that the Republican Party was attempting to be the big tent that embraced people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, and viewpoints (Pitts “New Style”).

In his examination of the failures of both liberals and conservatives on the issue of race, E. J. Dionne Jr. notes:

Talk of ‘spending more money’ and ‘improving values’ almost instantly invites disapproval from partisans on one side of the debate or the other, and that in itself is a sign of how our political culture encourages us to run away from solution. Our national discussion of race is so polarized that we do nothing at all—and the problem gets worse. We are in desperate need of a new politics that will create alliances across racial lines to allow us to act. (21)

Lenora Fulani’s perspective regarding Powell’s comments on affirmative action, his association with the Republican Party, and the Party’s poor record on inclusion, were more hopeful. Fulani, “a black leader whose philosophy and political independence go against the grain of both the Republican and Democratic parties” welcomed Powell’s
"admonition against partisan sectarianism" (11). Nonetheless, she asked "will you now take it upon yourself to reach out—not only to the black Democrat, but to the black independent and the vast, vast majority of black Americans who don’t participate in politics at all?” (11). Her letter concluded: “Your voice can make a huge difference to them and for them if you include the full range of political diversity in your efforts to ‘show the rest of the world the beauty and potential of democracy’” (11).

Convention analysts anticipated a different type of speech from Colin Powell, considering his blunt performance at the 1996 Republican National Convention and the fact that members of the campaign team had access to the 2000 speech earlier in the day (“CNN Live”). Much discussion about the speech focused on the messages Powell incorporated and how they were conveyed to his audience. Expected, perennial political issues were evident in Powell’s speech including education, race relations, and the military. Unlike Daniel Evans, who consciously avoided antagonistic issues in 1968, Powell faced them directly. Craig Smith concludes that Evans’ tactics resulted in an uninspiring speech. Though not all of his audience may have been inspired, Powell’s discourse made many take notice.

Powell utilized core American values such as hard work, equality, and family identified as part of the American Dream to unify his audience, unlike Mario Cuomo who used values of the American Dream to illuminate the differences between Democrats and Republicans. Powell’s formulation of language and discussion of sensitive political issues such as race relations and affirmative action made this speech stand out from the other rhetoric heard during the national convention, as well as any keynote address that came before it.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Political campaigns have undergone significant changes over time, changes that affect national party conventions. The conventions do not function as true nominating processes, causing the three major public television networks to deem them no longer newsworthy. Primetime coverage has been slashed. Cable news networks and the Internet provide the most coverage of, and access to, the modern campaign and its discourse. Despite the changing roles of media on political events, party conventions continue to serve important communicative functions, increasing the necessity for the few remaining rhetorical opportunities that receive media coverage to achieve their objectives.

The importance of the keynote address, and the person selected to deliver it, has become greater with changing technologies and campaign formats. The keynote serves to reaffirm the rightness of the American Dream, legitimate the party’s nominees, unify the party, and introduce the public to the “candidate’s rhetorical agenda” (Trent and Friedenberg 54). Thomas Hollihan argues that “the preservation of political liberty [...] depends on the ability to preserve the fabric of political community. The health of a political community depends on knowledge of public affairs, a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, and a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake” (193). The keynote address uses the tradition and the ritual associated with “ceremonial
oratory of display.” This type of discourse proves its subject “worthy of honour or the reverse” (Aristotle 1358b) depending on whether the orator’s aim is honor or censure. The ceremonial speaker is “concerned with the present, since all men [sic] praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time” (Aristotle 1358b).

The attitude of the American electorate in 2000 limited General Colin Powell’s ability to attack compellingly. If he had done so, he would have succeeded only in perpetuating the negative feelings held by his audience regarding partisan politics. If he appealed only to the traditional, conservative Republican planks, he would have failed to produce an argument capable of persuading a growing number of independent and swing voters to support George W. Bush. E. J. Dionne writes that “we need to find ways to tie citizens back into public life, not to turn them off even more” (18). General Powell’s keynote address is of rhetorical significance because despite pervasive pessimism toward politics in 2000, he met challenges existent in the rhetorical situation. By incorporating appropriate language choices, Powell exemplified a prospect of political hope for the troubled American electorate and created the sense of nonpartisanship. As a rhetor, Powell functioned as the right person in the right place at the right time.

According to Campbell and Burkholder, “good criticism and good critics aspire to add to our understanding of how humans use symbols to influence one another. Such criticism improves the quality of persuasive discourse in society and tests and modifies both the theories of rhetoric and the critical systems derived from them” (15). This analysis of General Colin Powell’s 2000 keynote address reveals the rhetorical significance of this discourse within the parameters of the presidential campaign. It adds to our understanding of how symbols that comprise the value system of the American
Dream function within a rhetorical situation and can be manipulated to generate discourse that overcomes the constituents of exigence, audience, and constraint.

Bitzer comments that “so controlling is situation that we should consider it the very ground of rhetorical activity” (1968 5). He notes that recurrent situations develop a style, grammar, and vocabulary that the audience can expect with some certainty. The typical keynote address both praises and censures through acclaiming, attacking, or defending. Praise is heaped upon the party’s candidate while the opposing party and its candidate receive the censure. These expectations have established the keynote address as a generic form of rhetoric with consistent, repeated characteristics determined by the nature of the situation in which the discourse occurs. Examination of Colin Powell’s keynote address revealed a dramatic departure from tradition at the 2000 Republican National Convention. Powell did not attack the Democrats; in fact, his discourse was almost entirely devoid of it. CNN analyst John King stated that the two major speeches delivered by Laura Bush and Colin Powell on the first night “with a few exceptions, could have been delivered by Bill Clinton or somebody in the Clinton Administration” (“CNN Live”).

Even though Bitzer’s claim of style, grammar, and vocabulary within a recurrent rhetorical situation was not supported by this study, I argue that Colin Powell was controlled by the situation in which his discourse was delivered. Bitzer tells us that without the appropriate speaker to create discourse, there is “no potential to alter reality” (1968 4). Powell generated discourse based on the controlling exigence, audience, and constraints functioning within the situation. Gwen Ifill called General Powell “a powerful symbol in [the Republican] party and publicly a powerful symbol far beyond it”
(Powell "Interview"). In response, Powell stated that "symbols can be translated into action. And there is no point being a symbol unless you use your symbolic position to try to force action" (Powell "Interview"). Powell not only acknowledged his symbolic duty as keynote speaker, but also his role as mediator of change within the rhetorical situation.

Powell's rhetoric delivered what research shows American voters longed for in 2000. They wanted the incessant bickering and partisan politics to end. He remained true to his rhetorical style by presenting problems and then solutions in a straight-forward manner. He used powerful, shared values in creating his discourse. He used the language of the value system identified as the American Dream, which includes hard work, education, equality, success, and many others to satisfy the political needs of his audience. This was useful for influencing the multiple and diverse populations within the established political culture he faced. As Walter Fisher states: "America needs heroes and rituals, presidents and elections, to signify her [sic] whole meaning—moralistic and materialistic; she requires symbols that her citizens can identify with and can gain sanction from for what they are as individuals and what they represent as a nation" (167).

This study focused on rhetorical situation and the communicative significance of General Powell's keynote address. Other issues such as race or class may have potential merit in future studies of Powell and his discourse. This study provides a foundation for such research. As the 2004 presidential election approaches, now Secretary-of-State Colin Powell remains at the center of the conversation of American politics. It is impossible to know what this election will mean for Powell and his political future. What we can know is that it will be influenced by his years of military service and leadership, and his belief in the American Dream.
WORKS CITED


<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/1000/ijde/ijde1000.pdf>.

Academic Search Elite. EBSCO. UNLV Lied Lib. 4 June 2003


Holloway, Rachel L. "One Nation, After All: Convention Frames and Political Culture."


Jamieson, Kathleen M. Hall. Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of


---. “Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation.” Philosophy & Rhetoric 6.3


King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The King Center. 16 Apr. 1963.


Search Elite. EBSCO. UNLV Lied Lib. 13 Feb. 2004


Leeman, Richard W. “Colin Luther Powell (1937- ) Four-Star General.” African-


U.S. Department of State International Information Programs. 14 Jan. 2004

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/1000/ijde/ijde1000.pdf>.


93

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


95


TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH USED FOR ANALYSIS

[Print transcript is from Federal News Service, Inc. In addition, a videotape recording of the speech was viewed to ensure accuracy and completeness of the discourse. Original indications of applause have been deleted from this transcript].

1. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. All right, thank you. Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. Oh, thank you for that very, very warm, warm welcome. It's a great pleasure to be with you all this evening, ladies and gentlemen. My fellow Republicans, it's a wonderful evening here tonight. And President and Mrs. Bush, a special, special good evening to you, sir. Good to be with you again. And I'm very pleased to be here with my old boss, Dick Cheney, and Lynne Cheney. I used to call him Mr. Secretary, and soon I'll be calling him Mr. Vice President. I like that. I want to thank Governor Bush for that very, very kind introduction, and I am deeply honored to again have the privilege of addressing a Republican National Convention.

2. In San Diego in 1996, I followed former First Lady Nancy Reagan to the lectern, after her moving tribute to President Reagan. I am delighted this time to follow Laura Bush, a lady of passion, dedication, and grace. She will be a great first lady. Do you agree with me or not? She'll be great.

3. During the almost seven years since I retired from the Army, I've traveled all across America. I've seen people hard at work providing for their families, giving of themselves, taking care of each other. I've seen them creating wealth for the nation. I've seen an economy transforming itself to seize the promise of the information revolution.

4. I've met so many of our fellow citizens who believe in America to the depths of their heart and who are doing everything they can in their communities to make our nation that more perfect union spoken of in our Constitution.

5. I've been moved yet again to stand in awe of the American dream, which was given birth in this city over 200 years ago, a dream that I have been privileged to live.
6. I've met so many young people who believe in the dream. They're on a road to success. They're being raised in strong families, going to good schools, filling the finest universities, graduating and then going on to find their place and fortune in this blessed land of ours.

7. Even the youngest of them, still in elementary school, are getting ready for the future, using computers, logging onto the Internet, while still enjoying the magic of childhood by curling up with a Harry Potter book. There is so much that is so good and right in America tonight, my friends that we ought to be very, very proud of this wonderful country ours.

8. And yet, I cannot ignore and we cannot ignore other things I've seen in my travels. I've seen poverty. I've seen failing communities. I've seen people who've lost hope. Tragically, I've seen too many young Americans who were overwhelmed by the daily struggle just to survive. I've seen kids destroying themselves with drugs, kids who see violence and crime as the answer to their hopelessness, kids who no longer believe in themselves and who don't see a reason to believe in America. I've seen kids in utter despair. I've visited kids in jail doing adult time for the crimes they've committed.

9. They are part of a growing population of over 2 million Americans behind bars -- 2 million convicts, not consumers; 2 million Americans who while paying for their crimes are not paying taxes, are not there for their children and are not raising families. Most of them are men and the majority of those men are minorities.

10. The issue of race still casts a shadow over our society. Despite the impressive progress we have made over the last 40 years to overcome this legacy of our troubled past, it is still with us.

11. So with all the success we have enjoyed and with all the wealth we have created, we have much more work to do and a long way to go to bring the promise of America to every single American.

12. And with all we have to do on our national agenda, I am convinced that to deliver on that promise, we must begin with our children. So many of the problems we worry about go back to how we raised our children.

13. The problem is as simple and as direct as this: We either get back to the task of building our children the way we know how, or we're going to keep building jails in America. And it's time to stop building jails in America and get back to the task of building our children. Listen, listen...

14. And listen, listen, listen very carefully. Our children are not the problem. They are our future. They are America's promise. The problem is us, if we fail to give them what they need to be successful in life. The burden is on us, not on our children.
15. That mission — that mission of providing for our children has become the passion of my life because what I've seen over the last several years convinces me of the following truths: One, that if you want to solve our drug problem, you won't do it by trying to cut off supply and arresting pushers on the street corners alone. It will only be solved when we place into the heart of every child growing up in America the moral strength never to fall for the destructive lure of drugs. The strength...

16. We will only solve and cure this plague of drugs is when we have given to each and every one of our children the strength to just say—and you've heard it before—just say, "No. Not me. I won't do it. I've got too much to live for. I'll never do drugs." And that's what we owe our children, to give them that strength to fight against the curse of drugs.

17. I believe... I believe that if you want to solve the problem of violence and crime on our streets, it begins with us teaching children to value life, their own and others, and to have respect for themselves and to have respect for others. If you want young people to become contributing citizens and not convicts, then early in life we must give them the character and the confidence they need to succeed in this exciting new world that we are laying out before them.

18. And it begins in the home. It begins with caring, loving parents and family members who pass on the virtues of past generations, who live good lives which serve as models for their children. Children learn from watching the adults in their family and their lives, and where the family is broken or where the family is not up to the task, the rest of us must step in to help as mentors, tutors, foster parents, friends to kids who desperately need responsible adults to show them the way.

19. Tens of thousands of our neighbors have already stepped forward, tens of thousands who realize that our children are a gift from God, not only to their parents, but to all of us. They belong to us all. We are all responsible for them.

20. We need to provide a safe place for those kids to learn and to grow, more clubs and after-school programs to protect them from the dangers that exist in our society and our streets. We need to surround them with more adults in these clubs who will keep them in play. We are obliged to make sure that every child gets a healthy start in life. With all of our wealth and capacity, we just can't stand by idly. We must make sure that every child in America has access to quality health care. We owe them nothing less. It has to be done. It is our responsibility to do that for our children.

21. As we are giving these necessities and other necessities to our children, let's ask them to also give something back to the community of which they are a part. Early in life, help them learn of the joy that comes from giving to others, help
them learn that through service to others, service to community, they will put virtues in their heart that will make them absolutely beautiful adults when they grow up; and that what's important in life is giving to others, not whether your sneakers cost more than someone else's sneakers. That's the kind of value and virtue we have to put into the heart of our children. Let our children be part of the solution.

22. With character in their hearts, with nurturing adults in their lives, our youngsters will be ready for the schooling that will give them the education needed to win those jobs of the future.

23. There's work for all of us here to do—parents, aunts, uncles, teachers, the government at all levels, the private sector, our great non-profits, our houses of worship, all joining in the crusade to point kids in the right direction of life.

24. And tonight, we focus on education, the keystone to it all. Governor Bush has rightly made children and education the centerpiece of his campaign for president. You heard him say it earlier, we can't leave any child behind.

25. Every child—every child deserves and must receive a quality education. Because when you give a quality education to a child who believes in himself or herself, then even with the bleakest beginning in life, that child can make it. And once that child makes it and gets out into the workplace and is earning a decent living, you have broken the cycle of poverty and failure for that family forever. Education is the key to breaking that cycle of poverty and failure.

26. So many... So many, many of our public schools are doing a fine job preparing our youngsters. I have been given no greater honor than to have had four public schools named after me, an honor that is greater than any medals I have received. In those four schools and so many others that I visited, you've never seen better facilities, you've never seen more dedicated teachers, you've never seen more involved parents. It makes your heart pound with pride to see those great schools that we have in America.

27. But I've also seen too many schools that are failing. They are trapped in fossilized bureaucracies—bureaucracies that have low expectations for children and consequently set low standards for them. These schools are failing our children, and they must be fixed, and they must be fixed now.

28. You know, if we truly believe—if we truly believe they are all our children then all of us must be willing to spend more to repair our schools and spend more to pay our teachers better, but we must also be open to new ideas. Let's not be afraid of standardized testing for students. Let's not be afraid of testing teachers' qualifications.
Let's not be afraid of charter schools. Let's not be afraid of using private scholarship money to give poor parents a choice that wealthy parents have. (APPLAUSE) Let's not be afraid of home schooling. Let's experiment prudently with school voucher programs to see if they help. What are we afraid of?

Let's use innovation and competition, good old American innovation, good old American competition to help give our children the best education possible. Why? You know, we invite skilled workers to come to America from all over the world to fill the good jobs that are waiting here. I think that's great. Immigration is part of our life's blood. It's part of the essence of who we are as Americans. I am the son of immigrants. But I also want our kids here educated and trained for those jobs. We owe it to them, and we've got to get on with the task right now.

Governor Bush has shown in Texas in just a few short years what can be done for education. As governor, he ended social promotions for kids. He increased state funding by $8 billion. He put new textbooks in every school in the state of Texas. He strengthened standardized testing in all Texas public schools.

He insisted on teacher competency, and he expanded the charter school movement. Seventeen thousand Texas kids are now in charter school. Seventy-eight percent of those kids are minorities. Their parents had a choice, and they decided what was best for their children. And the results—the results in Texas have been dramatic. The number of students in Texas passing all parts of the standardized tests since 1994, when Governor Bush came in the office, the number has increased by 51 percent. Even—even more exciting—even more exciting, the number of minority students passing the tests has increased by 89 percent. That's what we can do for our children.

He hasn't stopped there. He hasn't stopped there. To ensure a diverse college population, with the loss of affirmative action, Governor Bush has guaranteed acceptance at public universities to the top 10 percent of every high school graduating class in the state. And above all—above all—he has insisted on accountability for results that will tell us whether we're getting our money's worth.

You see, Governor Bush—Governor Bush has shown us that it works. It all comes together. Governor Bush doesn't just talk about reform, he reforms. And he has done it in Texas with education.

Governor Bush now offers the leadership that he has demonstrated in Texas to the nation. In pursuing education reform, as well as in all other (parts of his agenda for Texas, Governor Bush has reached out to all Texans) - white, black, Latino, Asian, Native American. He has been successful on bringing more and more minorities into the tent by responding to their deepest needs. Some call it compassionate conservatism. To me, it's just caring about people.
35. I believe he can do the same thing as president. I am convinced he will bring to the White House that same passion for inclusion. I know that he can help bridge our racial divides. I know that. Recently... Recently, Governor Bush addressed the annual meeting of the NAACP. He spoke to the delegates about his plans for housing and health and educational programs to help all Americans. He also spoke the truth to the delegates when he said that the party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln. I talked with him again today and I know that with all his heart, Governor Bush welcomes the challenge. He wants the Republican Party to wear that mantle again.

36. But he knows and I know and all of you must know that it's going to take hard work. He knows that that mantle will not simply be handed over, that it will have to be earned. The party must follow the governor's lead in reaching out to minority communities and particularly the African-American community. (And not just during an election year campaign, my friends, if we're) serious about this it has to be a sustained effort, it must be every day, and it must be for real. The party must listen to and speak with all leaders of the black community, regardless of political affiliation or philosophy.

37. We must understand my friends, we must understand that there is a problem for us out there. We must understand the cynicism that exists in the black community. The kind of cynicism that is created when, for example, some in our party miss no opportunity to roundly and loudly condemn affirmative action that helped a few thousand black kids get an education, but you hardly hear a whimper when it's affirmative action for lobbyists who load our federal tax code with preferences for special interests. It doesn't work. It doesn't work. You can't make that case.

38. Overcoming the cynicism and mistrust that exists, and raising up that mantle of Lincoln, is about more -- it's much more about than just winning votes, it is about giving all minorities a competitive choice. They deserve that choice. And if we give them that choice, it will be good for our party. But above all, it will be good for America, and we need to work to give them that choice.

39. Good for America—that must be the measure for all that we do. I believe that's the measure that Governor Bush will use to guide his actions as president. Whether it's economic policy or military strategy or seeing what we can do to make our American family more inclusive, he will always try to do that which is good and right for America.

40. Ladies and gentlemen... Ladies and gentlemen, we stand at an historic turning point in world history. For the first time in almost a century, America does not face an enemy fueled by an ideology claiming to be superior to our beloved system of democracy, free enterprise and the rights of men and women to pursue their individual destinies. We defeated communism. We defeated fascism. We defeated them on the field of battle, and we defeated them on the field of ideas.
The sick nations that still pursue the fool's gold of tyranny and weapons of mass destruction will soon find themselves left behind in the dustbin of history. They are investing in their own demise as surely as the Soviet Union did by investing in the Red Army. They are of the past, and we are of the future. Count on it.

41. Today, we are the most powerful nation on earth -- militarily, economically, by any measure. We are that rarity in history, a trusted nation whose power is tempered by compassion, whose leadership is earned by example and whose foreign affairs will be guided by common interests and common sense.

42. The world is watching to see if all this power and wealth is just for the well-to-do, the comfortable, the privileged, or are we a nation that can make our dream real for all Americans so that all share in what we have been given by a generous God?

43. We must show to the rest of the world, the beauty and potential of democracy. Our greatest strength is the power of our example to be that shining city on the hill that Ronald Reagan spoke of and that the whole world looks up to.

44. To continue to be that place, we must all work together. We must reach down, back and across. All of us coming together to show the world what our American family can do. That is the challenge. This is the time. And in Governor George Bush, we have the leader. Governor Bush—Governor Bush is a man who believes deeply in this country. He is a man who comes from a family with a generations-long tradition of public service. He will bring character and integrity to the Oval Office. He is a man of principle who will make partners and not enemies. He will use government to help where it makes sense and get rid of it where it doesn't.

45. He will win respect on the world stage by exemplifying the best ideals of America. He will not repeat the mistakes of the past and let our insurance policy, our armed forces, fall into disrepair. Ronald Reagan... Let me tell you something, Ronald Reagan and George Bush didn't let that happen, and I know that President George W. Bush will not let that happen either.

46. At his side as vice president will be a man I have known and respected for many years and with whom I shared many difficult days and nights during Desert Storm and other crises. He was a loyal and faithful steward of the young GIs entrusted to his care by the American people. Dick Cheney is one of the most distinguished and dedicated public servants this nation has ever had. He will be a superb vice president.
47. The Bush-Cheney team will be a great team for America. They will put our nation on a course of hope and optimism for this new century. A century historians will look back on and record not that it was the American century or the European century or the Asian century, instead let us pray that when they look back, they will call it the century of democracy, a time when America led the world that wants to be free to an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

48. For all our children's sake, above all, let us as a party strive from this moment on to make that century a reality. Fellow Republicans, fellow Americans, let's elect George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Thank you very much and God bless America.
VITA
Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Kehrin Kercher Thomas

Local Address:
  10996 Crispinio St
  Las Vegas NV 89141

Degrees:
  Bachelor of Science, Secondary Education, 1993
  Montana State University-Bozeman

Special Honors and Awards:
  Graduate Teaching Assistant Excellence in Teaching, April 2004

Thesis Title:
  Colin Powell’s 2000 Keynote Address: Compassionate Conservatism in an Age of Cynicism

Thesis Examination Committee:
  Chairperson, David Henry, Ph.D.
  Committee Member, Julian Kilker, Ph.D.
  Committee Member, Dolores Tanno, Ph.D.
  Graduate Faculty Representative, Matthew Wray, Ph.D.