

THE DISCOURSE OF AMERICAN TRAGEDY:
AN ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT CLINTON'S RHETORIC AS IT
FUNCTIONS TO CONSTRUCT REALITY, SHAPE COMMUNITY, AND DISPLAY
PRESIDENTIAL ELOQUENCE

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This is dedicated to all my
family and friends
for their constant support
throughout my education,
particularly my mother, Annette Bird
and father, Arthur Bird.
Thank you for your encouragement, love,
and being my biggest fans
throughout every step I have taken.

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ABSTRACT

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by Cassandra Bird

Community is built and maintained through our discursive actions and is no more apparent than in times of great national peril. President Clinton's emphasis on the national community in his rhetoric serves as the starting point for discovering how community functions as a pronounced element in his domestic crisis rhetoric. The aspect that makes this analysis both an important and interesting is the tension President Clinton must navigate between two sub-genres of rhetoric: crisis rhetoric and the national eulogy. The research question this study seeks to answer is: how does President Clinton navigate the tension between crisis and national eulogy while building a sense of community through his epideictic discourse in the wake of a domestic crisis in which innocent American citizens lost their lives? Analyzing these crisis moments for how the president is able to guide the nation while attending to the tactics present within each of these sub-genres creates a fruitful study for the field of rhetoric. To answer this question a textual analysis of Clinton's two epideictic speeches – at the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial and at the Columbine commemoration – that addresses the word choice President Clinton uses and how he is able to define and shape the tragedy through eloquent language choices was done. After analysis of each of the addresses, it is apparent that the president uses both forms of rhetoric to shape community in the wake of tragedy, but that the Oklahoma City Bombing address privileges national eulogy rhetoric and the Tragedy and

Recovery address privileges crisis rhetoric. This thesis serves as a starting point for furthering our understanding of Clinton's rhetoric and how it can function in moments of tragedy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Even in the midst of a tragedy we’ve seen the best there is to see about our nation and about human nature”- Bill Clinton, Columbine Memorial

The study of discourse is a particularly special type of practice that requires a unique perspective in order to understand the phenomena of communication in the human world. Rhetoric exists to tell a story, it does not exist for its own sake, and thus it allows one to understand the use of language as a means of disseminating an idea or building a community. President William Jefferson Clinton’s style of rhetoric has garnered attention and analysis from critics due to his ability to connect with a community through his rhetorical choices. Denton and Halloway (1996) and Muir (1994) noted Clinton’s ability to excel in the town hall style of debate and discussion that allowed him more one-on-one interaction with community members before he even gained the presidency. President Clinton made rhetoric the focal point of his campaign, “Clinton’s rhetorical style was the antithesis of the traditional ten-second sound byte [*sic*], which prior to 1992 had come to dominate campaign rhetoric” (Muir, 1994, p. 348). Additionally, the youth and charm of Clinton made his interpersonal communication something of awe and “gave him both excellent and favorable coverage in the press during his campaign” (Muir, 1994, p. 347).

His rhetorical ability throughout campaigning translated well into his two terms as president. According to Schrader (2009), “President Clinton was well-known for his ability to connect with his audience and he was often referred to as an accomplished speaker” (p. 216). President Clinton’s mastery of rhetoric is a combination of factors,

particularly focusing on his ability to merge his verbal and nonverbal skills within a mediated and often detached setting such as televised broadcasts. Clinton demonstrated a youthful, energetic personality eager to engage the American people up close (Seib, 1994, p. 283). Additionally, Muir addresses the way Clinton encouraged identification with the American people: "Clinton's ability to relate to his audience mainly took place by building a common understanding of the similarities in ways that people were suffering" (p. 350). Clinton created this identification through both personal narrative and the use of inclusive language that acknowledged the American people and their situation. Clinton's engagement with any and all policy and personal questions marked him as a different type of political leader- one with the competence and the intelligence to fully comprehend the nuances of the presidency. Todd Purnam (2000) of the *New York Times* recognized President Clinton's ability to act in the role of president and national communicator, "President Clinton has been extremely effective in the symbolic presidency, a talented politician, a gifted communicator; he has staged his presidency in a way that meets the needs of the information economy, a public sphere dominated by visual images, personality and sound bites. If we define effective as a president who can live in that world and survive and communicate some of his dearly cherished views, he has been effective" (para. 5).

Although Clinton's boyhood charm and Southern drawl captivated audiences worldwide, his presidency, from his first campaign for the office to the conclusion of his second term, was marked by accusations of indiscretions. Clinton defied his critics by surviving personal scandals, even earning the name the "Comeback Kid" for his ability to carry on in the wake of personal crisis. During his presidency, "he endured unrelenting

personal attacks from the right-wing of the Republican Party and a humiliating but unsuccessful impeachment trial by the U.S. Senate” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 57). Although controversy surrounded President Clinton near the conclusion of his second term in office, he still left his position as president with the highest end-of-office approval rating of any U.S. president since World War II (Kahl & Leff, 2006).

Given Clinton’s ability to bounce back from scandals, rhetorical critics have naturally emphasized Clinton’s ability to talk his way out of controversy rather than the numerous other forms of rhetoric in which he excelled. There have been a number of inquiries into the way Clinton was able to use rhetoric to escape charges of a sexual relationship with Gennifer Flowers (Seib, 1994), accusations of draft-dodging during the Vietnam War (Seib, 1994), and finally his most notable controversy, the Monica Lewinsky scandal which was such a popular topic that the American Communication Journal dedicated an entire issue to the situation (Kramer & Olsen, 2002; Kiouisis, 2003; Simons, 2000; Orban, 2002). Rhetoricians have used generic criticism to analyze Clinton’s mastery of apologia but his rhetoric outside scandal has been analyzed infrequently.

However, an analysis into his rhetoric following an accusation of personal misconduct is not the only way President Clinton should be remembered by historians and Americans alike. “Bill Clinton and his mastery of policy matters has created an expectation that a presidential contender ought to have the ability to engage in intricate policy matters in a facile and competent manner” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 56). Clinton was not just a distrustful and unsavory character getting himself in and out of scandals, but rather, one that attended to and fulfilled his obligations as president.

Therefore, the study of Clinton's rhetoric outside the typical and often remembered area of apologia brings insight into a president that was a great communicator and leader of our nation.

President Clinton's emphasis on the national collective serves as a great starting point for discovering the way community functioned as the pronounced element in his rhetoric. Clinton's focus on the community and betterment of the American society came before he was even elected president. During the 1992 campaign season Clinton took the metaphorical high ground in his declaration that "the election was not merely about issues, but about the character of the American people" (Miller, 1993, p. 345). In doing so, his campaign was run on the "New Covenant" that, as Miller (1993) states, "provided Clinton with the opportunity to tap into the values of community, inclusion, responsibility, opportunity, and change" (p. 347). Thus the proposed research departs from the common analysis of President Clinton's apologia into one of the original focuses of the president and his rhetoric. This research seeks to discover how Clinton rhetorically managed two tragic events through nationally televised speeches: The Oklahoma Bombing Memorial Address in response to the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995 and his Tragedy and Recovery address in response to the Columbine High School shooting on April 20, 1999. These events claimed the lives of American citizens and Clinton appeared before the national community to help them better understand the incidents and find comfort in the wake of them.

In the rhetorical community there has been a lack of research into both the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial text and the Tragedy and Recovery text. The only

published critiques of Clinton's Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial are an exemplar in the national eulogy chapter of Campbell and Jamieson's book *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* and Schrader (2009), in her article "Teachable Moments in Presidential Eulogies." President Clinton's Tragedy and Recovery address following Columbine has received no published critique. Therefore, both of these moments of discourse leave open the opportunity to better understand Clinton's rhetoric and his ability to lead the nation through crisis. To fully understand the implications of these moments of rhetorical address it is important that one has a base knowledge of the contextual elements present in the days before and after these incidents of tragedy.

In the field of rhetorical analysis there are several different arguments about the spectrum, role, and relevance of context. The importance of understanding context is highlighted by Wichelns' (1925) assumption that the primary difference between the practice of literary criticism and rhetorical criticism is this idea of rhetorical context. Bitzer (1968) argues that for rhetorical discourse to exist there must be a rhetorical exigence, or an "imperfection marked by urgency, a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, or a thing which is other than it should be" (p. 60). In order for an event to be considered a rhetorical exigence, it must be a situation that can be remedied or repaired through the discourse. To gain an appreciation for the circumstances surrounding the president in the wake of these crises, I will briefly address the exigence and moment of discourse for both the Oklahoma City Bombing memorial and the Tragedy and Recovery address.

Context of the Oklahoma City Bombing

Prior to the bombing in Oklahoma City, in April 1995, the president was nearing the conclusion of his first term and beginning to campaign for a second. Clinton was in deep political trouble as “six months earlier, voters had resoundingly rejected Democrats in the 1994 mid-term elections, giving the GOP control of both House and Senate. Polls showed the public viewed Clinton as weak, incompetent and ineffective. Clinton appeared to be politically dead” (York, 2010, para. 4). The value of his current presidency was so low in the days and months before the bombing that on April 18, 1995 Clinton expressly told reporters that, “The president is still relevant here” (York, 2010).

On April 19, 1995 at 9:02 a.m., a bomb that had been built within a truck parked outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building exploded, demolishing over a third of the North side of the building. At the time of the bombing, hundreds of innocent employees and a daycare of young children were going about a normal day’s work, unaware of the terror soon to come. In total, the explosion killed 168 men and women, 19 of whom were children; in addition to the 168 killed, there were more than 680 people injured in the attack (Johnston, 1995). The bombing was the deadliest act of terrorism on American soil until the September 11 attacks six years later.

The man responsible for the attack, Timothy McVeigh, would be caught ninety minutes later for driving with expired tags. McVeigh was an America militia sympathizer motivated by his hatred of the federal government. Angered by the events at Waco and Ruby Ridge that he perceived to be mishandled, he sought to even the score by attacking a symbol of the federal government. McVeigh was later convicted of planning and

implementing the attack and sentenced to death; he was killed by lethal injection in June 2001.

The shock and fear instilled across America in the wake of the bombing was reflected in the news media. Melinda Henneberger (1995) of the *New York Times* wrote, “then the worst terrorist attack ever undertaken on American soil came to what many local residents had proudly referred to as a place where nothing ever happens. Like dozens of the people interviewed here, they say that neither they nor the city they love will ever be the same” (para. 6). The article continued with a quote that demonstrates the shock felt by many after the attack, “you don't expect terrorists to drop a bomb here, said Troy Mize, a 31-year-old security guard at a medical building. Not in Oklahoma. We didn't seem that important. But if they can come into Oklahoma City, you don't know what to expect” (para. 13). The feeling of fear swept across the nation; Rick Bragg's (1995) *New York Times* article reflected the sentiments felt by many: “this does not happen here, it happens in countries so far away, so different, they might as well be on the dark side of the moon. It happens in New York. It happens in Europe” (para. 7). Citizens that were struggling to comprehend the nature of the attack and the now present threat of the potential for a similar event shaking their neighborhoods and towns created a crisis in need of a response from a national spokesperson. The president was called upon to address the weighing concerns and growing fear sweeping both large and small towns across America.

President Clinton released a short statement at 4 p.m. on the day of the bombing acknowledging the tragedy as a national act of terrorism. Four days later, a memorial was held for the families of those who died in the bombing. More than 11,000 people

crowded into the Oklahoma State Fair Arena on a cold but clear afternoon to hear President Clinton offer words of consolation to an emotionally drained city. Thousands more listened in a nearby building on the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds and in an All-Sports Stadium. The one-hour, 40-minute service was called “A Time of Healing.” President Clinton gave a nine-minute address to define the incident and comfort those who lost loved ones on that day. At the conclusion of the memorial those in attendance filed out quietly until a spontaneous but full-voiced round of “Oklahoma!” -- including a boisterous “yip-e-o-i-a” -- went up from several hundred people in one of the exit corridors. It was the first outward sign of relief from the grimness that had gripped this city for nearly a week.

Context of the Columbine Shooting

Almost five years to the day later, President Clinton faced another major tragedy. On April 20, 1999, at 11:19 a.m. seniors Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris entered the Columbine High School courtyard and began a massacre that would shake both the community of Littleton, Colorado and the nation as a whole. Carrying homemade pipe bombs, knives, guns, and ammunition, the boys strolled through the halls of the school opening fire on any innocent students that crossed their path. They had planned and hoped that on that day they would slaughter over one hundred students, but most of their bombs malfunctioned and were unable to detonate (Johnson, 2004). The two boys reigned terror on the school for fifty minutes, killing 12 students and one teacher before turning the guns on themselves and committing suicide at 12:08 p.m. In addition to the fifteen lives that were lost that day, 27 injuries related to the massacre were reported. On

that day Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado became one of the top five deadliest school shootings and is still the worst high school shooting in America (Johnson, 2004).

Similar to the Oklahoma City Bombing, the news media were able to capture the American reaction to the event that did not just affect the small town of Littleton, Colorado, but rather the entire nation. The Columbine shooting tragedy became the most closely watched news event in 1999 with 68% of the public reporting that they had been following the shooting story closely (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 1999). Surveys also showed a drastic increase in the American community's concern with teenagers and the influence entertainment media and guns have on their behavior (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 1999). In the *New York Times* article written by Timothy Egan (1999), he quotes the concerns of the potential threat that many American's were feeling about what could happen in their schools and towns, "the fact that the worst school shooting in modern times happened in one of those places where Americans tend to move because they are seeking good schools -- in this case, Jefferson County, Colo., one of the fastest-growing areas in the nation -- came as a surprise to many Americans" (para. 1). The climate across that nation was one of fear and uncertainty because many felt that if it could happen in Littleton, Colorado, it could feasibly happen anywhere. The ever growing threat of school shootings upped the anxiety as one student sums up a present feeling in Paul Zielbauer's (1999) *New York Times* article: "school killings are starting to feel like an annual ritual, said Christopher Sales, a Somers High senior. 'I wouldn't be surprised if it happens again,' he said" (para. 17). The stage for a presidential speech had been set and American's were anxiously

awaiting answers and understanding, as found in Carey Goldberg's (1999) article, "but even more than posting outward signals of distress over the killings in Littleton, Colo., schools around the country turned inward today with an intensity inspired by no previous school mayhem, seeking solace and answers and assurance" (para. 1). The climate of America was one of concern and confusion that could only be defined by a national speaker, President Clinton.

President Clinton released a three-minute speech on the day of the shooting recognizing the terrible nature of the event and what the American government was doing to support the families of Columbine. One month later, on May 20, 1999, President Clinton and the First Lady, Hillary, came to the town of Littleton to give a memorial address for the 13 that lost their life that day. *The Denver Post* reported that the Clintons met privately for two hours at a nearby church with 75 parents and relatives of the deceased earlier in the day; they exchanged hugs and cups of coffee while thumbing through students' photo scrapbooks. There was no large fanfare that usually greeted the President and First Lady, just families coming together in grief to share their story with the leader of the nation. The larger commemoration came later that evening at nearby Dakota Ridge High School. Each of the Clintons spoke to the crowd of 2,200 for about thirty minutes each, moving members of the audience to tears. President Clinton consoled the victims and survivors of the Columbine incident by asking them to help heal America with their inspirational faith, love, and courage. The Clintons met with the crowd after the address, exchanging words of sorrow and hugs with those who attended the commemoration.

The situational characteristics referenced above help underscore the relevance and purpose behind the selection of these two instances of rhetoric. When one thinks about moments of domestic tragedy, it is likely that the events of 9/11 quickly come to mind, but before this tragedy America suffered the loss of citizens in two sudden and deliberate attacks to the American way of life, the Oklahoma City Bombing and the Columbine shooting. “Tragic events in American history have prompted some of the most memorable presidential addresses, as leaders rose to the challenge of soothing a grieving nation” (Travers, 2011, para.18). Therefore, research into Clinton’s rhetoric departs from the often referenced and analyzed rhetoric of President Bush following the September 11th attacks. Additionally, these two events are terrorist attacks on American soil by clearly identifiable American offenders, which is unlike other domestic tragedies that fall under the category of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, or systemic disasters, such as the *Challenger* and *Columbia* shuttle explosions. Finally, these moments represent tragedies that killed or injured unarmed and unnamed American citizens, which are unlike the assassinations of prominent Americans such as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. The purpose of this study includes more than a mere interest in the rhetoric of President Clinton; it assists in the continued study of rhetoric and the enhancement of one’s understanding of the role of the president in the wake of a rather specific form of American tragedy.

The common characteristics present within these addresses offers a comprehensive purpose for this study beyond merely an interest in Clinton’s rhetoric. On a theoretical level, the study of Clinton’s rhetoric following these domestic crisis situations --incidents that occur on United States soil and cause the death of American

citizens -- is an essential endeavor for multiple reasons. First, the study of domestic crisis discourse under the generic constraints of epideictic, or ceremonial, rhetoric is an emerging form of criticism that offers a new perspective on linguistic choices made by rhetors. Often research into domestic crisis addresses utilizes the Aristotelian category of deliberative rhetoric, which focuses on future endeavors or policies one may choose to pursue, but the interpersonal style and abilities of President Clinton opens up the genre of epideictic during crisis situations in a new and interesting way. This perspective sheds light upon Clinton's leadership abilities in moments unrelated to scandal, even during some of the darkest times in our country.

Second, the relationship between epideictic and the building of community through discourse related to a domestic crisis is in need of deepened analysis and interpretation that can be furthered through the critique of Clinton's discourse. Traditional notions of epideictic rhetoric have placed it strictly in the category of ceremonial discourse, and although many epideictic addresses do maintain an air of this notion, scholars have justifiably expanded the genre to encapsulate more elements of oratory. Viewing domestic crisis rhetoric through this lens is appropriate and offers valuable insight as to the rhetorical choices and community building ability of rhetoric following these situations.

Another aspect that makes these events particularly rich and interesting for analysis is the constraints placed on President Clinton to navigate the tensions between two sub-genres of rhetoric: crisis rhetoric and the national eulogy. These discursive moments present the challenge of determining what rhetorical devices to present in a speech so as to comfort the nation while still maintaining an element of future-focused

vision for the nation. A president that misinterprets this tension runs the risk of over politicizing a terrible event in our nation, as Travers (2011) states, “presidents can use tragedies and crises to bring the nation together, but there is also a risk to being seen as politicizing such events to further a political agenda” (para. 9). Analyzing these two moments of crisis for how the president is able to guide the nation while attending to the devices and tactics present within each of these sub-genres creates a fruitful hybrid genre for the field of rhetoric to further explore in later research endeavors.

Finally, the social world is built through our discursive actions and any rhetorical critique maintains a traditionally historical practice that has helped frame communication patterns and our notion of reality. “Rhetoric is an attempt to build community by exchanging symbols, and since the building of community is what makes us the most human, listening to what people have to say is to pay them the ultimate compliment” (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 35). The role of president affords him the opportunity to engage with the most substantial number of Americans due to the nature and power the position holds over the citizens of our nation. Clinton is often remembered as a president who was able to engage in effective communication with the American people; therefore, studying a man who excelled at using symbols to build community not only helps on further the field, but it also assists one in understanding the success of a man once called “Slick Willy”.

With the context and nature of rhetoric, specifically that of President Clinton, already outlined, in the second chapter of this research literature review I will discuss the theoretical and methodological approach for the analysis. First, I will present a discussion of the historical importance and function of rhetoric and rhetorical criticism.

Following the foundational development of rhetoric, I will outline presidential rhetoric, which serves as a basis of understanding the future generic aspects of the analysis. Additionally, I will outline the nature of genre, referencing the more specified elements of the epideictic, crisis, and national eulogy genres as well as the tensions present between those two sub-genres. I will conclude by discussing the specific text and methodology employed for the research. This analysis will illustrate how President Clinton attempted to balance and navigate the rhetorical devices of domestic crisis rhetoric and national eulogy in order to frame the events for the entire nation and build a sense of community through language techniques that illuminate shared values and eloquence.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The text under consideration appears at the intersection of the generic system of epideictic, presidential rhetoric, crisis rhetoric, and national eulogy; therefore, a functional understanding of each of these elements is essential in understanding the limitations put upon the rhetor. To begin, I will discuss the scope and role of rhetoric as a basis of understanding the role of oratory in the wake of the tragic events.

Rhetoric

Everyday we are bombarded with messages that teach, inform, or persuade us to act or behave in a particular manner. Often times these messages proceed without recognition, but for some these messages make up the basis of their passion in research and discovery. The study of rhetoric is not a new one; in fact, it is actually rather old. The ancient Greeks were among the first in the world to systematically study persuasion, calling it rhetoric. Rhetoric was a pervasive element in everyday life for the ancient Greeks and Romans. According to Hart and Daughton (2005), “rhetoric was studied by the ancient Greeks and Romans, by medieval courtiers, by renaissance theologians, and by political thinkers in the emerging democracies of the eighteenth century” (p. 37). Rhetoric was studied in the ancient Greek and Roman schools, it was used within the legal environment, and it helped to build the first democracies of our world. In each of these periods there was a sense that rhetoric possessed something both powerful and special, that when one delivered an inspiring address upon a political platform or spoke

with vigor in front of a religious congregation they were engaging in something so much more than the transfer of a message.

The power once recognized in those ancient times is still present today, in that there are multiple media channels to explore and the study of rhetoric is still being used with fervor. Aristotle wanted to give this art a more systematic, more philosophical, treatment than it had received in previous handbooks of rhetoric. This goal was partly in response to the negative views of rhetoric expressed by Plato in his dialogues called the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. Although Aristotle was not as popular a teacher of rhetoric as his contemporary Isocrates, he did produce a seminal and in many ways original treatise of rhetoric (Corbett, 1984). Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, "as a faculty or art whose practice will help us observe in any given case the available means of persuasion" (p. 21) has seemingly dominated the field of rhetorical studies for the past 2,500 years. Critics often take this Aristotelian conceptualization to refer to the art of persuasion or the way in which orators abuse that art.

Although rhetorical critics still use this familiar definition, the term rhetoric has gained flexibility and has evolved over time as a useful way to reference a wide array of experiences. In order to better understand the perspective of this proposal the following definitions are provided. First, according to Bryant (1953), "rhetoric is the rationale of informative and suasive discourse with the primary function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas" (p.403). Bryant recognizes the importance of tailoring rhetoric to meet the needs of an audience, whether that be the implied audience or the audience present at the moment of discourse. Burke (1969) outlines another useful view of rhetoric: "rhetoric is the language people use as a symbolic means of inducing

cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. Inducing such cooperation involved the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (p. 55). Burke engages his definition in the way communication allows one to make and manage meaning through the symbolic use of communication and thus allows for a wide range of texts to be considered “rhetorical”. These perspectives, in combination, represent rhetoric’s social and artistic value as presented by people and their messages.

Understanding what constitutes a valuable piece of rhetoric worthy of analysis and research is just one part of the puzzle; one must also recognize the significance and importance of the practice of rhetorical criticism. Researchers have set forth many definitions within the field that help demonstrate the ever growing need to peruse endeavors within the field. First, according to Wichelns (1925), “literary criticism is concerned with evaluating the wisdom, beauty, and truth contained in the great works of fiction, while rhetorical criticism is devoted to assessing the persuasive effect of situational oratory. Rhetorical Criticism focuses on discovering and appreciating how speakers adapt their ideas to a particular audience” (pgs. 21-22). This distinction is an important one as the field and study of rhetorical criticism has evolved; although wisdom, beauty, and truth are valuable elements to discover in rhetorical criticism, the situation and audience are also of significant importance in the study of discourse. President Clinton had to speak to a troubled American public about events that are particularly disturbing. Thus, for his addresses to be successful, he needed to adapt to the audience and situation at hand. Wraga (1947) is able to demonstrate the lasting societal and historical importance of this form of research and discovery, “rhetorical criticism can

make important contributions to social and intellectual history. Ideas are expressed in many different forms-not just in the major philosophical, literary, and historical works. Specifically the ideas, values, and beliefs of a culture are expressed in speeches” (p. 28). In an epideictic address the rhetor must use the values that an audience holds as a means of defining and shaping the community and their reaction to a particular event, thus the culturally relevant ideals are expressed in choices the rhetorician makes. To further the discussion of rhetoric, I will explore the scope and role of presidential rhetoric as a basis of understanding Clinton’s part in the wake of the tragic events

Presidential Rhetoric

The position of president of the United States is unique in that no other position possesses the power and authority to influence collective thought and memory of domestic instances to the degree and magnitude as that of the presidency (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000). Although presidential rhetoric is studied from various perspectives in multiple fields, this research is often in search of patterns, insight, or understanding of what the focus of the office is increasingly about: rhetoric (Zarefsky, 2004). In research, scholars such as Ceaser, Thurow, Tulis, and Bessette (1987) claim that presidential rhetoric has become too pervasive in political life, stating “popular or mass rhetoric, which president’s once only employed rarely, now serves as one of their principle tools in attempting to govern the nation” (p. 4). The fear that comes along with this claim is that as presidential rhetoric becomes more common it loses the power it once had by becoming debased, conversational, and less valuable to the American people (Stuckey, 2010). However, Zarefsky provides a counterargument, stating that presidential rhetoric

and the symbols associated with the presidential office matter because presidential rhetoric has extraordinary power, particularly in moments where discourse is needed to define an event. According to Carpenter (1994) “Presidential political power is often derived from communication prowess” (p. 103).

The audience of presidential rhetoric is slightly more difficult to determine; presidents do not speak for the sake of speaking but rather, address a particular issue to a particular audience given the context of the situation. The president is frequently asked to address a variety of audiences. Determining the audience to which the president is speaking is vital to understanding the rhetorical choices present in the given discourse. Defining and constituting an audience brings with it significant power, particularly when the president addresses the masses as “the people” which carries with it a specific understanding and connotation: when addressing the people “that identity is frequently a familiar one: presidents often describe the American people as peace loving, generous, and democratic” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008, p. 7). For the American people to persist, there must be something that they think they have in common, and without a shared race, religion, heritage, or even language, the only things that would seem to be left are indeed ideas and the rhetoric used to explain them. In the wake of tragedy, the American people need to hear a message of reassurance, resolve, and unity only the president of the United States could provide.

The president’s definition of the people and for the people relies on the process of constitutive rhetoric. Through discourse, the rhetor often hails particular members of the populace; audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position. Charland (1987) explains, “constitutive rhetoric is part of the discursive

background of social life. It is always there, usually implicitly, and sometimes explicitly articulated” (p.147). The way in which rhetors are able to hail an audience is through the use of narrative; this method allows the rhetor to highlight the struggles and issues set before a collective community and acts as a point of differentiate from those outside the identity of those hailed though the discourse. According to Zagacki (2007), “constitutive rhetoric is crucial during founding moments when advocates try to interpellate or hail audiences calling a common, collective identity into existence” (p. 272).

The moment one enters into a rhetorical situation they are experiencing interpellation, that is, as soon as they recognize and acknowledge being addressed in some fashion. Interpellation occurs rhetorically, through the effect of the addressed discourse. At particular moments in history, rhetoricians are able to perform ideological repositioning upon those whom they intend to hail through the formulation of the text of discourse. “This identification occurs through a series of ideological effects arising from the narrative structure of constitutive rhetoric” (Charland, 1987, p. 147). The structure of constitutive rhetoric suggests that particular genres are more likely to utilize this formal mechanism than others. The following section will define and discuss the theoretical implications associated with genre in rhetorical criticism.

Genre

It is human nature to use systems of classification as a means of understanding and organizing the complexity of our existence within this vast world; the field of rhetorical study is no different. The existence of genre classifications reflects our human

tendency to catalog information or to make sense of the world through the development of expectations based on previous experiences within similar situations (Agnew, 2008).

At its base, genre means class; a genus is a type, sort, or group of regularities that rhetoricians find to be relevant to rhetorical life and discourse. “The decision to classify a particular group of things as a genus rests on recorded observations which indicate that one group of entities shares some important characteristic which differentiates it from all other entities” (Harrell & Linkugel, 1978, p. 263). However, it is important to recognize that a genre is not a static form. The concept of genre has evolved from being known as a system of classification into a construct within rhetorical criticism that helps a critic and rhetor understand the functions of rhetoric. It is possible that one can assume that certain rhetorical acts should exhibit certain tendencies based upon the genre to which they belong (Fisher, 1980).

The rhetorical field tends to define genre through Campbell and Jamieson’s (2008) conceptualization, which states, “genres can be defined by their pragmatic ends and typified by their substantive, stylistic, and strategic similarities” (p. 9). Genres are comprised of a wide range of recognizable forms that are bound together by an internalized dynamic (Sullivan, 1993). The labels that are often associated to particular addresses, such as commencement addresses or inaugurals, suggest that there is latent understanding that each of these forms of discourse is somehow different and distinct, and likely possess identifiable features and functions while still sharing the features intrinsic to the genre. Genres offer a way of grasping and understanding experiences for audience members and critics alike (Murphy, 1997).

Rhetorical critics often attempt to classify texts based on a wide range of elements present within the phenomena under interpretation. Unlike many other forms of criticism, generic criticism departs from the traditional approach to rhetorical analysis that often criticizes a singular piece of discourse and generally addresses multiple pieces of discourses. Genres act as generalizations developed through rigorous and careful examination of various pieces of similar discourse (Fisher, 1980). By addressing multiple speeches the critic is able to draw conclusions about categories or types of rhetoric.

Speaking specifically in terms of genres created through the presidency, Campbell and Jamieson encourage scholars to “view the emergence of identifiable genres across time as creating a coherent sense of the presidency that transcends the idiosyncratic use of any one of these genres by any single president” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008, p. 9). The way the presidency has come into being is a result of all the actions and rhetoric of those presidents that have come before. Campbell and Jamieson recognize the reach of the president as “an amalgam of roles and practices shaped by what the presidents have done, a process in which rhetorical practices have been of particular importance” (p. 2). Presidential genres include rhetoric of inaugural addresses, national eulogies, pardoning rhetoric, State of the Union Address, veto messages, Presidential War rhetoric, rhetoric of impeachment, and farewell addresses to name the predominant few.

Genre provides the critic a structure in which to interpret events and social actions beyond mere categorization of discourse (Agnew, 2008). To exclude the conception of genre from the range of possible tools for rhetorical study neglects a vital instrument in the analysis of discourse and one’s understanding of the functionality of oratory.

Although not all classifications are salient, it is difficult to talk about moments of discourse without classifying it based on the audience's current understandings of similarities or dissimilarities it possesses in reference to other like or unlike events or instances (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008). Campbell and Jamieson demonstrate the difficulty in avoiding generic classifications when they claim "that a concept of genre is necessary to any critical consideration of an object, process, or event can easily be demonstrated if one tried to think about a poem or political speech without using any terms that refer to kind or relationship it has to other items, one's thoughts quickly grind to a halt" (p. 14). It would seem plausible to conclude, then, that all criticism falls within the constraints of generic criticism because no matter how unique or undiscovered a text may seem, one would immediately start developing categories that this text may be aligned with, thus creating a new or stronger genre.

Ultimately, when one chooses to engage in a generic analysis of discourse they are discovering the link between the function of the text and the form in which it is presented. Campbell and Jamieson note the revelations the critic is able to unmask through the use of a generic approach: "although generic analysis emphasizes similarities, generic critics are not interested in any and every similarity; rather, they are interested in those similarities that make the work rhetorically absorbing" (p. 15). The framework that this audience can create in collaboration with the rhetor allows for the development of meaningful communication that can transcend time and elaborates upon previously developed genres (Agnew, 2008). Thus the ultimate goal of critics who employ a generic perspective is to explain the strategies typically used by rhetor and audiences that encompass certain similar rhetorical situations (Murphy, 2003).

Engaging in a generic critique of a work does offer valuable insight, however in choosing a particular lens for the analysis of a text some elements of the discourse may be privileged while others are overlooked. Thus, when critics embark upon research within a generic category it is important that they recognize that the method they are choosing to employ is just one a several different approaches that could be undertaken in the discovery of rhetorical strategies at work. As stated by Campbell and Jamieson, “the critic can know that the critical categories they are using are only one set among many, which is to say, the critic can know that generic classifications of rhetorical works has very little to do with unequivocal classifications” (p. 14). Therefore the use of a genre can prove to be enlightening and offer insight into a particular text that may otherwise go unknown if other approaches were used. “A critical use of genre operates pragmatically to consider the ends- that is, the functions or purpose of discourse- and means- the strategies of language and argument through which the rhetorical ends may be achieved” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008, p. 15). Before a rhetorical critic is able to work within the confines of a given genre, the classification must be developed; therefore, the initial task of any critic is to identify the overarching scheme by which the systematic classification of discourse may be organized (Harrell & Linkugel, 1978). In the next section, I begin narrowing this focus by discussing the form and function of the epideictic genre.

Epideictic Genre

One of the most prominent rhetorical developments Aristotle is credited with is the establishment of the generic classifications of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic rhetoric. This tri-partite division of discourse allowed for the interpretation of relevant

texts based on historical determinations of appropriate elements within each genre. One of the basic classifying elements of these forms of rhetoric is found on a temporal level; epideictic is said to be primarily concerned with the present, deliberative is primarily concerned with the future, and forensic is primarily concerned with the past (Aristotle). Beyond a sheer focus on the present moment, Aristotle demanded that those engaged in an address under the macro-genre of epideictic must be able to focus not only on the present issues but also create continuity among the past, present, and future values and beliefs within a culture (Corbett, 1984). In addition to receiving credit for the labeling of these three forms of public address, Aristotle also established the parameters of praise and blame that are often associated and have historically limited the epideictic genre. The traditional definition and understanding of epideictic rhetoric are those instances where an orator is delivering some type of ceremonial or celebratory speech.

The temporal orientation of epideictic communication is largely connected to the present time. Performances within this genre tend to be informed by their present time association in unique and special ways. This form of oratory is one of symbolic action closely related to the occasion and moment of that particular performance and is able to create social cohesion through the illumination of these common values (Danisch, 2006). Epideictic involves a reciprocal relationship between the speaker and audience in which the audience actively supplies the materials for the discourse while simultaneously judging the speaker's ability to construct valuable and illuminating statements from the provided materials (Oravec, 1976). Epideictic rhetoric is a celebration and reinforcement of communal values and traditional beliefs (Sullivan, 1993) but epideictic discourse plays

a more significant role in the public world beyond just that of commemoration (Hauser, 1999).

One perspective of epideictic that many scholars immediately reference is images of gaudy verbal baubles synonymous with excess or artifice. The earliest understanding and discussion of the epideictic genre tended to focus on the stylistic properties of the speech in addition to its status as a ceremonial address aimed at the praising and blaming of people and institutions rather than a more pragmatic function of discourse (Beale, 1978). Throughout Aristotle's definition of these rhetorical phenomena there is no discussion of the social or philosophical functions of epideictic speech, which leaves this genre greatly disadvantaged (Duffy, 1983).

This view of epideictic discourse deemphasizes the importance of it as a rhetorical genre due to the trivial moniker it is generally given as "entertainment discourse"; according to this perspective, epideictic discourse concerns topics that are unimportant in the production of choice and action. From this negative perspective, the effects of this genre of discourse would be nothing more than a distraction from real and pressing problems within the practical world (Oravec, 1976). The past misunderstandings of the entire epideictic genre have been to the detriment of both rhetoric and the epideictic genre alike; this blame has often been placed at the hands of Aristotle due to the misunderstandings afforded by his work and ultimately the marginalization of the entire genre (Graff & Winn, 2006). Research into the substantive, stylistic, and strategic similarities present within this macro-genre has been slowly dissolving this negative representation into a different understanding of how epideictic rhetoric functions (Agnew, 2008). To better organize and understand the scope and limitations of the

epideictic genre a new system of analyzing rhetorical moments for their epideictic strategies is proposed by researcher Celste Condit.

Condit (1985) proposed a perspective that defines epideictic in relation to a three-fold set of paired functions. Condit developed three sets of characteristics that many epideictic speeches share: definition/understanding, shaping/sharing of community, and display/entertainment. These three components are designed in dyads that explain the role of the rhetor and the role of the audience, respectively. Generally, “an epideictic speech will feature one or a combination of these functional pairs, but rarely will be devoid of any one of the pairs” (Condit, 1985, p. 288).

Condit recognizes the value of epideictic’s original conceptualization of praise and blame through her dyad of display/entertainment. The display/entertainment component recognizes that many ceremonial speeches ask the speaker to display a level of eloquence and entertainment when speaking. Eloquence is developed through a combination of truth, beauty, and power; the epideictic speech is unique in its ability to release the rhetor from the burden of focusing solely on issues and offering them the opportunity to be creative in their delivery and diction. Warnick (1982) writes, “eloquence is the art of communicating noble ideas in a style appropriate for the subject matter and occasion, and its goal was to edify listeners and inspire them to virtue” (p. 264). Applebome (2008) recognizes the value eloquence and rhetorical skill has on leadership and national memory:

The past century had fewer great orators but more whose words actually translated into lasting leadership, the speeches that stand out as the best speeches stand as distinct reminders of how words can move people and transform history.

The audience does not judge the speaker for their artistry alone; the audience will judge the eloquence the message because audiences rightfully take the expressiveness of a speaker as a sign of leadership and power. Much power still resides in rhetoric rendered eloquently and delivered with oratorical skill. (1)

An epideictic speech praises and blames only the common values that are important to that particular audience during that particular exigency (Danisch, 2006). Epideictic rhetoric also often addresses posterity. For instance, we can think of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address when he states that the world can never forget what the dead soldiers did to preserve our country and way of life. Graff and Winn (2006) note that both style and substance influence the degree to which an epideictic address is eloquent and memorable:

One aspect's technical and formal insofar as certain figures and other stylistic devices can be employed to epitomize traditional value judgments, call up cultural knowledge, or elicit participation of audience in the discourse; another aspect is broadly social and independent of verbal form, where communication is the term used to denote a community's agreement around the values affirmed in epideictic performance, values that subsequently serve as starting points for forensic and deliberative discourses aimed at immediate action. (61)

Most often, an epideictic address is written in high style that is laden with formal language that creates understanding within a community. The speaker is able to generate a sense of community centered on the particular values the rhetor chooses to distinguish as important; to this end, they are able to use a wide range of means available at their disposal to amplify the message they are attempting to send (Agnew, 2008). These

addresses will often take their very subjects from the present actions or ceremonies and use them as a means of bolstering pride and faith in the foundation of the present system and community (Beale, 1978). According to Burke (1969), “the very appeal of such address was directed to the very presence of the words and the speaker themselves, not for some ulterior purpose, as with convincing a jury of a past act or moving an assembly to make a decision about the future, but purely because it was aimed to give delight in exercise in eloquence as such” (p. 71). A desirable leader, especially the leader of the nation, generally knows truth, has the capacity to recognize and use beauty, and is able to manage power. If rhetor’s can display these functions eloquently, then they will stand a good chance of being a leader the community will easily respect and follow. While the original and defining element in Aristotle’s era was eloquence, present-day epideictic rhetoric fulfills functions beyond this one alone.

The definition/understanding pair is used to explain the social world; audiences will seek out and welcome speeches of an epideictic nature to explain an event, person, or group. Epideictic oratory focuses not necessarily on the factual truth within events, but rather, on a more interpretive historical account and can thus act as a tool for celebrating values within the actions of past deeds (Duffy, 1983). Zarefsky notes that presidential rhetoric and the symbols associated with the presidential office do matter because presidential rhetoric has extraordinary power, particularly in moments where discourse is needed to define an event. “Because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public” (Zarefsky, 2004, p. 611). The label attached to a situation provides the appropriate response of the

American people and their government. Defining a situation is not merely discussing the event in terms of what has happened, but rather by placing it within a larger context and identifying a common definition and understanding of an event for the entire community.

One of the most effective functions of epideictic rhetoric in instances such as these is to place the present event in a past context that highlights the experiences and values that a community has held in similar situations as a means of connection for audience members to understand and subsequently react to the current situation (Dow, 1989). The speaker may spend a great deal of the speech defining the shared importance of the occasion by linking the audience to the past and the different groups within the audience to each other. The persuasive power of epideictic, therefore, rests neither on the speaker or audience alone, but rather upon the formation of a relationship between the two that is able to lead to mutual understanding (Agnew, 2008). Epideictic is the rhetoric of a system that constantly encourages the public to adopt a respective way of life.

This ability to define a situation or crisis garners the speaker a high level of power and persuasion over the audience (Condit, 1985). The opportunity for a rhetor to praise and blame significant public incidents or people allows for the chance to address fundamental values and beliefs that make democratic and political action more than just a theoretical possibility (Hauser, 1999). “Social reality is not given, it is chosen from among multiple possibilities and hence could have always been otherwise; presidential rhetoric defines political reality” (Zarefsky, 2004, p. 611). Epideictic works as reinforcement and transformation of a community through a shared vision, even if that vision creates a need for some type of national or communal change (Agnew, 2008). In

fact, rhetors often try to use the perceptions and commitments of a community's shared values as a means of serving future agendas (Vivian, 2006).

The third and final function of epideictic rhetoric that Condit identifies is the shaping/sharing of community. Through epideictic rhetoric, the speaker is able to build a cohesive understanding of the importance of symbols, values, myths, and the heritage associated with the community environment. The knowledge that is shared by those within a community functions as a legitimate source for truths that arise from traditional heritage and enable the public to make competent decisions concerning new truths, values, or behaviors (Smith, & Hyde, 1991). Epideictic rhetoric often addresses the unquestioned values an audience holds, and thus, it is a method of education that is aimed at displaying, amplifying, and enhancing the values that bind an audience together at a present moment. Epideictic speeches are vital to the political process because of their ability to maintain shared values and justify future actions. These decisions will often be made through epideictic's ability to establish grounds of praise and blame against or for particular communal understandings or actions (Vivian, 2006).

There are common characteristics that help one define and understand what constitutes a community. The word community can be used to explain a wide variety of groups, from a family to a nation. A public is a community of persons who share common conceptions, principles, and values, and who are significantly interdependent (Smith, & Hyde, 1991). The level of interdependence and relational qualities that are essential to community and human existence alike are stated by Buckler (2007):

Community is seen as an organic grouping based upon shared characteristics and structured by relationships that are constitutive rather than instrumental. The need

to belong is intrinsic to the human existence. There relationships are deeper than those of association in the sense of both being prior to the choices of individuals and of placing potential more extensive and fundamental obligations upon persons. (p. 41)

The reference to heritage is generally explicitly labeled throughout an epideictic address. A rhetor is able to constitute or reconstitute a public through the part and traditional values a group of people may hold, which demonstrates the power of rhetoric of definition, as Vanderhaagen (2008) states, “the process of public and collective articulation about a shared past and tradition enables a community to reconstitute its identity in ways that render it more capable of change, flexibility, and thus resilience” (p. 536).

The community functions as a source of stability and moral regulation. Condit (1985) explains, “the community renews its conception of itself and of what is good by explaining what it has previously held to be good and by working through the relationships of those past values and beliefs to new situations” (p. 289). These renewals can happen on a consistent basis or be called forth by specifically troubling events; when a situation of drastic change protrudes into community life, the rhetor will be called forth to explain the meaning of the event and discuss the challenges the community will face in the wake of the event. In moments of tragedy the community is reunited not only on an emotional level, but also are given directions as to how to restore a sense of order to their day-to-day life. To speak from this shaping and sharing perspective allows the rhetor the opportunity to shape and share certain historical events and create a sense of communal life (Murphy, 1997). By creating these linkages and reminders, the rhetor is indicating

the hopes and behavioral expectations of the community in the future (Condit, 1985). Speakers and audiences who seek to fulfill the true promise of the epideictic genre must unite within the boundaries that shape the cultural moment in which they have come together, but in order for the communicative act to be established as significant the rhetor should work creatively to push the boundaries of the genre in new and interesting ways (Agnew, 2008).

The growing use and adaptations of the epideictic genre provide a rhetor an opportunity to harness social power through the development and use of communal definitions based on the interpretation of values in accordance to the challenge or exigence present. Agnew (2005) best states the potential power this genre holds for the social collective, “although assessments of epideictic are diverse, they generally share the conviction that epideictic possesses a social power that can be realized when rhetors and audiences cooperatively create a vision that defines and celebrates the community’s values but leaves open the possibility that those values can be creatively reinterpreted in response to new challenges” (p. 153). For example, John M. Murphy studied the rhetoric of President George W. Bush in the wake of the September 11th crisis from the perspective of the rhetorical hybrid of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric. War rhetoric is generally analyzed from the deliberative perspective, which aims to justify the expediency or practicality of an action, but Bush used it in combination with epideictic and thus made the claim that, “we go to war because it is a practical act and an honorable choice” (Murphy, 2003, p. 331). The power of the epideictic address from this contemporary perspective is illustrated through the exemplar of President Bush’s rhetoric. Murphy states, “these rhetorical strategies crafted the authority president

George W. Bush needed to dominate the public interpretation of the events of September 11” (p. 331). President Bush spoke through the medium of epideictic and was able to creatively reinterpret the situation as an opportunity to promote his future agenda and the community’s response to the challenge that lay before America.

Epideictic is the common genre used to address rhetoric following a tragic event, but the sub-genres of crisis rhetoric and national eulogy serve as tools for understanding the way epideictic functions and explains these events. The goal for the speaker is that, through rhetoric, this upsetting event will become less threatening and provide a sense of comfort for audience members (Condit, 1985). This will help achieve the goal of framing the situation and providing an explanation of the crisis for members of the community that find the incident upsetting and confusing; generally this explanation will be done through terms that are related to the audience’s key morals, values, and beliefs. In summary, the epideictic structure proposed by Condit consists of three sets of characteristics that many epideictic speeches share: definition/understanding, shaping/sharing of community, and display/entertainment. The display/entertainment component is focused on the style in which the speech is constructed which often asks the rhetor to display a level of eloquence and entertainment when speaking. The definition/understanding pair is used to explain the social world; this component focuses not necessarily on the factual truth within events, but rather, on an interpretive account of the situation. The third and final function of epideictic rhetoric is the shaping/sharing of community. This pair focuses on how the speaker is able to build a cohesive understanding of the importance of symbols, values, myths, events, and the heritage associated with the community environment or the situation. This pair acts as an

educational communal bonding method that is aimed at displaying, amplifying, and enhancing the values that bind an audience together at a present moment.

It is important to recognize that these pairs are not mutually exclusive. For example through the development of a common definition the audience is guided to the appropriate communal response to the events, thus one can define the event in ways that unite the community. Also, if an epideictic address is written in high style it assists in the creation of a sense of understanding within a community, which, if a rhetor's display is eloquent, then he or she will stand a good chance of being a leader the community will easily respect and follow. The three pairs interact to develop a communal understanding of events for an audience in ways that provide persuasive power to a rhetor. The comfort a community feels is a result of the guidelines the rhetor sets for the community and the way they present the common values of the community can act as a way of restoring and unifying the people. Analysis of epideictic from the perspective of crisis rhetoric and national eulogy offers valuable insight into the way Clinton's rhetoric functioned in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine shooting.

Crisis Rhetoric

Events such as the Hurricane Katrina's devastation or the *Challenger* explosion may not happen on a regular basis but in these moments one may need further clarification and reassurance from a public figure to fully understand the nature of the event. The nation, as a community, has experienced a loss and is searching for a way to assign meaning and responsibility to the event (Dow, 1989). Events such as these are often labeled a crisis by the media and political leaders alike. Crisis rhetoric often

includes speeches concerning national or international emergencies. Crisis rhetoric is discourse that addresses a particularly salient issue without the commitment to a full-fledged war (Dow, 1989).

Many scholars agree that events are not inherently crisis situations; rather, labels that we attribute to events, such as “tragedy” or “crisis,” provide filters through which a president may define reality (Windt, 1973). “Events become crises, not because of unique sets of situational exigencies, but by virtue of discourse used to describe them” (Cherwitz & Zagacki, 1986, p. 307). Therefore, it would seem that this sub-genre of epideictic oratory has particular salience to the understanding of rhetorical criticism. To clarify, crises are unique moments in the history of global or national society that are often constituted by the elements of surprise, threat, and short response time (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007).

Whereas these three characteristics of crisis are threatening, “crisis, of course, has connotations of both threat and opportunity” (Bostdorff, 2003, p. 308). Crisis rhetoric also carries with it enormous change and community building potential. During the past two decades, communication and political science researchers have dedicated much of their research to the way communication is used in the midst of a crisis. During that exploration into crisis response strategies, several theories and sub-genres of rhetoric have been discovered to explain the rhetorical choices and strategies made by a rhetor. The common thread is that most of the rhetoric is found in the aftermath of the crisis, but that rhetoric may change from one crisis to the next pending the particular crisis situation at hand. Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) discuss that a crisis response generally “combines strategic communication that helps alleviate risk and restore public safety with

deeper more humanistic communication” (p. 377). The president is placed in the position of helping the community to return to a functioning condition. This communication should, “focus on the substantive issues of repair, recovery, rebuilding, and helping victims make sense of what has occurred and to envision a new reality” (Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010, p. 378).

Although a crisis can be a particularly dangerous and damaging situation for a nation, if a president or national leader effectively communicates the nature of the events to a stunned public it can actually improve the reputation and standing of the country (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008). Presidents can benefit from the “rally around the president” phenomenon that helps all commander-in-chiefs in moments of crisis, if they are able to articulate and discuss the devastation with the American community (Bostdorff, 2003). This explanation of crisis makes it apparent that the government pays particularly close attention to the function of crises as a political instrument used to initiate a drastic reform.

Although most of the listening audience may not be involved on a personal level, they still feel a sense of uncertainty surrounding the crisis and they possess the basic human need to understand what effect the event will have on both a personal and national level. This often requires that the president explicate their response during the wake of the crisis (Dow, 1989). Presidential rhetoric often attends to recurrent rhetorical tasks such as military action or crisis communication (Murphy, 2003). At the moment of a potential crisis, presidents must carefully consider the voice they will use to respond to and define a crisis; their choice will ultimately have an impact on their effectiveness in leading the public to a directed course of action and restoration (Lawrence, 2007). Presidents have the power to demonstrate their leadership through the words and tone

they choose to approach a situation (Bostdorff, 2003). In most situations the president will construct the public understanding of the crisis and, through rhetoric, define the critical nature of the situation and how the public is able to return to its stable and original function.

Crisis events invoke a certain responsibility for the president to create this definition, adding a sense of importance that may not be found in all epideictic addresses. This responsibility that the president may feel is connected to the vulnerability experienced by the audience and their need for reassurance. Despite the negative connotations associated with the word crisis, this term is one of the most powerful within the presidential vocabulary due to its potency and ability to evoke unity and encourage common sacrifice among the community. The concern and caution many presidents take in labeling a situation a crisis points to the importance emotions such as hurt, guilt, and fear play in crisis situations and crisis rhetoric.

This power of rhetoric leads Cherwitz and Zagacki (1986) to emphasize the importance of the words presidents use to either define or create understanding: “words perform acts significant to the management of crises. In a sense, presidents do by saying when responding to crises; their words constitute an identifiable set of actions complementing, and in some cases supplementing, other nondiscursive policies” (p. 308). Once a discourse has been labeled “crisis rhetoric” the challenge then becomes how the president is able to unite a community and frame the situation as an opportunity for substantial change or reform. A competing form of rhetorical response to a crisis that results in the death of American citizens is the national eulogy.

National Eulogy

A national eulogy is a subcategory within the genre of epideictic discourse, crisis rhetoric more specifically, in which the president assumes an almost priestly role as a means of helping the public understand a tragedy in which American lives were lost. Campbell and Jamieson state, “in this televisual age, the national eulogy takes the form of oral discourse predicated on the intimate relationship among the dead, the nation, and the leader who speaks for the nation and who can begin to heal its wounds” (p. 80). This sub-genre of rhetoric often emerges as a result of an unexpected catastrophe that kills U.S. civilians while also presenting a threat against an important national symbol. For instance, the World Trade Centers acted as a symbol of American economy and the Pentagon was a symbol of American national security or the *Challenger* shuttle as a representation of American space exploration. In many cases, the members of the national community that lost their lives represent the best of us.

The crisis nature of these exigencies necessitates a national eulogy, which will specifically address the event that has disrupted American life. The goal of this particular form of oratory is to transform a crisis from a moment of destruction and devastation into a symbol of the resilience the nation possesses to overcome the most difficult obstacles. Rarely will the president make a national address in the event that American military members have lost their life during a military engagement because there is a reasonable expectation of that event happening when one signs up to be a member of the service. Another distinction of an unexpected crisis may be between death during wartime and death during relative peace. Innocent citizens “are the victims of disaster or of the malevolence of terrorists, and they were supposed to be protected by the nation and its

government” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008, p.81). It is the president’s responsibility as the leader and representative of the country to help the national community understand the death and suffering of the event and, through the rhetorical choices, transform the crisis in such a way that the nation’s values and determination are stronger and more secure than ever. According to Campbell and Jamieson, “the national eulogy links the present to the future with a central line of argument: that those who died exemplify the best of a nation that will survive this moment because its ideals cannot be undermined by events such as those that took their lives” (p. 77).

The president is the most likely candidate to speak to the national community in the wake of a large-scale crisis that has left the nation both horrified and shocked. As Campbell and Jamieson state, “the moment created by these events are a powerful invitations for presidential response because the calamitous deaths threaten our sense of ourselves as a nation, and that threat is heightened because the public experiences it collectively” (p. 76). Shrader (2009) illustrates the experience the public has and the trauma induced by such events, “audience members are reminded of their own mortality upon the death of another person or persons, and this can be a very traumatic confrontation” (p. 217). This overwhelming devastation creates a moment where the public feels a sense of disorder to their communities and way of life. The president must speak not only to the emotional unrest of community life, but also work to restore order to American life.

The purpose of the national eulogy can be summarized through the four main generic characteristics a president may use to fulfill the previously discussed goals (Campbell and Jamieson, 2008). First, the personal tone the president adopts is

reminiscent of that of a priest or pastor while still addressing the public on an individual level. In doing this the president may speak of God and prayer in a way that suggests that he will be praying for the nation or even engage in a form of religious reverence.

Second, the president addresses what the crisis or tragedy means for the entirety of the nation by framing it from the larger, ongoing national perspective. Third, the president recognizes and reinforces that those who died represent the best of America and are a direct symbol of all those in our nation. Fourth, and finally, “except in unusual circumstances, the national eulogy explains how the president and the government will ensure that this tragedy will not be repeated” (p. 80).

Campbell and Jamieson use multiple exemplars to demonstrate how the elements listed above work together to help the nation understand devastation. Among the examples was President Reagan’s response to the *Challenger* explosion and President Bush’s responses to both the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Hurricane Katrina. Campbell and Jamieson highlighted the idea that a president that is able to respond well to these devastating events will be admired by the entire nation. “They show their leadership; they speak to our hearts; they heal our pain; they make us believe that, whatever happens, the nation has a secure future” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008, p. 103).

My discussion of the rhetorical classifications has moved from the general term genre to the more specific genre of crisis rhetoric and national eulogy, which falls under the subcategory of epideictic rhetoric. This foundational understanding is invaluable in moments of tragedy because these moments require a president to outline their response and demonstrate their leadership to the nation. Tragedies have so much potential to

evoke unity and communal identity and this is particularly salient in a national eulogy address. The national eulogy has the president address an event that has disrupted American life by the killing of innocent citizens. In the wake of an event that has killed and injured American citizens the president is faced with a tension between the goals and tactics of the national eulogy and those of crisis rhetoric, as will be explained in the following section.

Tension Between Crisis Rhetoric and National Eulogy

The best way to understand the constraints President Clinton faced throughout the Oklahoma City Bombing and Columbine memorial addresses is to recognize the tension present between the tactics and goals of the national eulogy and crisis rhetoric. The methods section brought to light the importance these two sub-genres of rhetoric have for the rhetorical community and for the genre of epideictic, but there are aspects of each of these responses that weigh on the president and the rhetorical choices he makes following the event. A crisis situation may necessitate a national eulogy and thus these two sub-genres of rhetoric share similar rhetorical goals. In the case of the national eulogy, as Dow (1989) states, “the community has experienced a loss, and its most basic need is to assign meaning to that event and to discover how to proceed following it” (p. 297). On the other hand crisis rhetoric “creates similar needs because the audience feels a sense of confusion and a need to understand the event for the nation as a whole and how the nation will proceed” (p. 297). In both of these sub-genres of rhetoric the president is faced with a community that is searching for answers to a particularly troubling event.

The primary means of distinction between crisis rhetoric and national eulogy is that crisis rhetoric involves the use of strategic communication that is more deliberative than the national eulogy, which is more traditionally epideictic. After labeling an event a “crisis,” the challenge and goal of the president then becomes to unite the community and frame the situation as an opportunity for substantial change or reform. The goal of the national eulogy, however, is to transform a tragedy from a moment of destruction and devastation into a symbol of the resilience the nation possesses to overcome the most difficult obstacles. This moment provides the president with an opportunity to define the catastrophe, diminish the pain associated with the event, and restore order to community life. “Such speeches are a way to take a tragedy and to be sober and somber but also use it as a way to bring the country together and to move it forward” (Campbell and Jamieson, 2005, p. 94). To best understand how a president is able to navigate these tensions there are a series of competing tactics employed in the success of each type of rhetorical endeavor.

The tactics of crisis rhetoric are more policy-oriented in that the president asserts that he is informed of facts or information of the situation beyond that of the American community. In the national eulogy, on the other hand, we see the president adopt a more personal tone that is reminiscent of a priest or pastor while addressing the public on an individual level. Rather than focus on the information the president is privy to, the rhetoric of the national eulogy will focus on connection to each audience member from pastoral and religious framework.

In crisis rhetoric the president can gain rhetorical power by comparing the evil motive of the enemy and the pure motive of the United States whereas the national

eulogy will require the president to frame the event from a larger, ongoing national perspective that recognizes that those who died represent the best of America. Rather than focusing the efforts of the rhetoric on a common enemy as in crisis rhetoric, we see a national eulogy employ a tactic that highlights the best of America through the victims of the tragedy while placing the event on a national platform.

Finally, in crisis rhetoric beyond asserting that the role of president comes with the privilege of knowledge, the president will explicitly use rhetorical tactics to move beyond the crisis situation to the policies that he deems moral and practical in nature (Dow, 1989). In order for the community to feel comforted, restored, and unified after a disruptive event, they must be given guidelines for interpreting and responding to the experience. The national eulogy focuses rather on how the American government will ensure that a similar tragedy will not be repeated. Although moving a tragic event to the national perspective rather than tailoring the issue to localized area may create rhetorical power for future agenda initiatives, it is not the primary tactic of the national eulogy framework. Rather, crisis rhetoric will harness the rhetorical power of such tragic events to further future policy and political initiatives.

The effect of both these strategies is to create communal meaning for the events that is consistent with the audiences pre-existing values and beliefs that simultaneously helps guides the response of the nation; hence the reason these sub-genres rely on the three paired functions of epideictic rhetoric. A rhetor will feel a sense of tension while trying to balance both of these goals in the wake of a tragic event and one of these tactics may become more pronounced in a given speech. The focus of this form of rhetoric is on defining the troubling event for an audience while exerting leadership power and a

previous agenda in the wake of tragedy rather than focusing primarily on the consolation and mourning the dead. National eulogy rhetoric is less concerned with strategy and agenda and more so with the consolation of the American public and “weaving shocking events into a parable of American history and national mythology” (Campbell and Jamieson, 2005, 92).

To summarize, the study of Clinton’s rhetoric beyond that of *apologia* provides interesting insight into a man known for his communication and interpersonal behaviors. The unique position of the president affords him the power to influence both the memory and identity of the American community. This rhetorical ability has extraordinary power in moments where discourse is necessary to define an event. Using the macro-genre of *epideictic* provides the mechanics of defining/understanding, shaping/sharing community, and displaying/entertaining to help highlight the definitional power of rhetoric; it helps to build a common understanding of the importance of symbols, values, and heritage to a community environment. The next section will present the methodology that will focus on both the theoretical concepts and how I will use them to analyze President Clinton’s national eulogies.

Methodology

The research question that this study is ultimately seeking to answer is: how is President Clinton able to navigate the tension between crisis and national eulogy while building a sense of community through his *epideictic* discourse in the wake of a domestic crisis in which innocent American citizens lost their lives?

To answer this question, I will conduct a textual analysis of Clinton's two epideictic speeches – at the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial and at the Columbine commemoration – that will specifically address the word choice President Clinton uses and how he is able to define and shape the tragedy through eloquent language choices. Textual criticism focuses on the intentional efforts of texts and such analysis provides a useful means of examining texts for the social constructs presented within them. As Leff and Sachs (1990) noted, rhetorical texts create a reality for the consumer through the assignment of meaning to experiences shared by the group as a whole. Leff and Sachs state the powerful role of text and discourse “is to blend form and meaning into local unities that ‘textualize’ the public world and invite audiences to experience that world as the text represents it” (p. 270). To understand the rhetoric of Clinton, one must attend to the details in his words.

I will focus my analysis toward the particular generic elements of crisis rhetoric and national eulogy as the rhetorical tactics Clinton uses to generate a sense of community in this epideictic moment. I will research the text for the stylistic and linguistic choices Clinton made to fulfill the goal of both crisis and national eulogy rhetoric. In this endeavor, I will organize my analysis around the three-paired functions of epideictic rhetoric, namely how Clinton's rhetoric functioned to define reality, shape community, and display his eloquence while navigating the tensions of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric. Each section uses various excerpts of the addresses to highlight the tactics of the categories of epideictic rhetoric. This determines how President Clinton navigates the tensions present between both the necessity of delivering a national eulogy and a crisis rhetoric response.

The analysis of these two moments of discourse will determine and evaluate, the question of how Clinton employed community building techniques through his linguistic choices. Therefore, these two texts provide a significant body of work that can further both the rhetorical discipline and one's understanding of Clinton's rhetorical choices beyond those in response to a scandal situation. The analysis and exploration will begin with a discussion of how President Clinton constructs reality in the wake of these tragic events.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

Constructing Reality

Defining and constructing reality is a fundamental function of epideictic rhetoric; when an upsetting or confusing event has occurred, audiences will often turn to a public figure for definition and construction of a reality that will help make sense of what has happened. Creating a common definition and understanding of the event enables a rhetor to use the tragedy for a future agenda or to restore the nation after destruction. The rhetorical tactics Clinton uses to generate a communal definition of the event is to hail a national audience and then define the event by what it means for the entire nation. These tactics shows how the president creates a communal definition and works through the tensions of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric in his addresses.

Hailing the American Audience

In the two addresses under consideration, Clinton expands the events from isolated incidents to issues of national concern by hailing an American audience. The constitution of an audience is understood by the subject position one acquires within the text. As Black states, “auditors look to the discourse to which they are attending for cues that tell them how they are to view the world, even beyond the expressed concerns, to the overt prepositional sense of the discourse” (Black, 1970, p. 113). In both speeches, Clinton uses language choices of inclusion as a mechanism to hail an American audience. In the Oklahoma City Bombing memorial address, Clinton (1995) invites identification and hails the audience in an explicit manner, through his invitation “to the families of

those who have been lost and wounded, to the people of Oklahoma City, who have endured so much, and the people of this wonderful state, to all of you who are here as our fellow Americans” (p. 573). The hailed audience is further expanded to include the entirety of the listening audience that identify themselves as American as Clinton states, “to my fellow Americans beyond this hall.” (p. 573). The audience and community that shall be constructed and shaped include not only those directly involved in the bombing, but all those who identify with and are hailed by the label of “American”. The value of identifying the audience to which this speech is constructed is that the definition and arguments presented by the president will be adjusted and selected according to the audience to which he addresses the speech.

In the Tragedy and Recovery Address, Clinton uses a similar, albeit less specific, form to hail an American audience. President Clinton (1999) opens his address by referencing those within the small community affected by the shooting: “Dr. Hammond, Mr. DeAngelis, President DeStefano, and the state legislators, county commissioners, Attorney General Salazar, especially Governor Owens, thank you for being here. To all the officials who are here, most especially to the students of Columbine and the students who are here from Chatfield and Dakota Ridge” (p. 820). However, as the address progresses he references the American people and the national community by identifying how this “small town event” effects an American audience. Specifically Clinton hails this expanded audience through the statement, “when American looks at Jefferson county, many of us see a community not very different from our own; we know if this can happen here, it can happen anywhere” (p. 821). This phrasing invites identification with the larger American community and relates the events of Columbine to every citizen

across the nation. In this address, however, we see the president invite the larger American audience in a more implicit manner than in the Oklahoma City Memorial address. A school shooting strategically involves a less explicit enlargement of the audience than an address after a terrorist attack because terrorist attacks are such a significantly less common event than a school shooting that the American public may need to be explicitly hailed by the rhetor. The uncertainty resulting from a rare terrorist attack may leave many to believe that because it did not happen in their community it does not necessarily pertain to them. However, with a school shooting many American citizens know or have children in the school system and as such believe that they have a stake in the event and thus are more likely to listen to or be affected by the president's statements.

Ultimately, Clinton rhetorically hails, in both of these speeches, those who identify with American ideals and the national community. The president may be addressing two different forms of terrorism but in each case it involves an American audience that is scared and confused by what has happened and is searching for answers about the nature and result of the attacks. The decision to address the American community is strategic in that following each attack the American community felt the fear associated with such violence due to the potential of such events occurring within their community. Thus the president opens his comments and addresses the entire nation as an act of consolation and sign that the American government is working to prevent any future threat of attack across every community in our nation. Had the president been addressing Congress he may have made more deliberative or judicial arguments about what has happened or if he had been talking explicitly to those affected by the tragedy,

the approach to constructing community would change. However, the president is speaking to all American citizens seeking the president's consolation and guidance. The president also frames the event on a national scale so as to further hail an expanded American audience.

Define the Event by What it Means for the Entire Nation

Beyond speaking to and hailing all Americans, Clinton also describes the events in relation to the entire nation. These definitions are not a natural interpretation and thus demonstrate the power of rhetorical definition. Clinton begins the process of building an American community by developing a communal definition of what has happened so citizens understand the gravity and magnitude of the troubling or confusing situation. The first label associated with the Oklahoma City bombing comes early in the address when Clinton states, "this terrible sin took the lives of our American family" (p. 573). The function of the word sin is not just that of mere definition; the meaning "sin" carries with it substantial power to influence the audience. Sin is often referenced in a religious manner that includes any thought or act that is considered immoral, selfish, or harmful, thus the deliberate nature of the attack on the federal government compounds the already substantially violent transgression against not only the American legal system. Words hold significant power particularly in moments of crisis so the reference to this event as a sin, not just an act against America, frames the event and the notion of reality for the audience and employs religious rhetoric as a powerful persuasive definition due to the privileging of national eulogy through religious connotation and a priestly tone. Additionally, it reduces the likelihood that one can develop reasoned arguments for the

terrorist actions committed that day due to the placement of the event on the level of right and wrong.

Additionally, the president frames this event not just as an offense against American citizens but rather against the American family, which implies a sense of inclusion and connection between all Americans. The way we react to the death of a stranger and the death of a family member are intrinsically different experiences so labeling this an attack on a familial unit evokes a deeper set of feelings, grief, mourning. This ultimately invites a sense of unity and inclusion among all Americans in this family while simultaneously hailing the wider audience necessary for the address.

To further the development of the community's definitional understanding of the event, Clinton emphasizes the intense nature of the situation by noting the victims' "pain is unimaginable" while defining it from a national perspective by saying "we share in your grief" (p. 573). Presidential definitions change the public understanding of an event and ultimately help to clarify the appropriate response to these situations. The audience understands the gravity of the event and that the process of pain and mourning is appropriate in this instance. This statement also provides those suffering with a sense of togetherness and guides the entire American community to share in their grief through the use of the inclusive language of "we share", rather than just stating the "unimaginable" nature of the pain survivors may be experiencing. Engle (2007) recognizes the power that collective understanding and mourning has for the connection of communities, "what binds us together as friends, lovers, or even communities is the shared experience of mourning" (p. 62). This sense of togetherness provides an opening

for the shaping of community under one common understanding of the nature and extent of the situation.

In an effort to persuade the American people to unite, President Clinton pushes the community onward and works to instill the need and will of the people to fight and pursue in the wake of the crisis: “you have lost too much, but you have not lost everything.” (p. 573). The notion that the American community still prevails despite death and devastation demonstrates the community’s ability to unite and stand against an evil force. This statement recognizes the intense gravity of the situation and that many Americans, both close and separated from the situation, feel as if they have lost so much, whether that be loved ones or a sense of safety in their country. He continues, “And you have certainly not lost America, for we will stand with you for as many tomorrows as it takes” (p. 573), identifying the pain and loss that most Americans are experiencing while rhetorically uniting the community around the common definition of American perseverance despite tragedy and destruction. This is, after all, one of the primary goals of the national eulogy.

The concluding remarks of this address focus on the hope that can be attached to situations such as these. President Clinton constructs a new reality not based solely on the historical details of the event but rather on the potential it holds for America and the hope of better days, he states, “my fellow Americans, a tree takes a long time to grow, and wounds take a long time to heal. But we must begin. Those who are lost now belong to God. Some day we will be with them. But until that happens, their legacy must be our lives” (p. 574). President Clinton addresses the fact that the healing process in the wake of the bombing will take time and patience on the part of the American community but

that those who were killed or injured will never be forgotten. Presidential definitions affect the whole frame of reference within which the event is discussed; this power in rhetoric and definition can be used strategically as a means of altering the public's conceptions of reality in a way that boasts the president and his endeavors. The president highlights the unforgettable nature and defines the event as one of great relevance and as such the event and our historical account of it should be approached from a perspective of significance and reverence. This helps add a heightened awareness and presence in the minds of the public, which can help in the efforts of consolation or aid in the future agenda of the president.

The Tragedy and Recovery address shares a similar pattern of identification of the incident on a national level. Within the first moments of the address, President Clinton frames the issue on a much larger scale than the school of Columbine alone with these quotations: "this has been a long, hard month for all of you, and as Hillary said, it's been a hard month for America" (p. 820) and "I hope you have been comforted by the caring not only of your neighbors, but of your country and people from all around the world. All America has looked and listened with shared grief and enormous affection and admiration for you" (p. 821). In these quotations, Clinton first emphasizes the duration of time between the day of the disaster and an official response from the highest office in our country. He also broadens the scope of the pain inflicted to include the national community and opens the channels for the development of a communal understanding of the drama and power of this situation due to the fact that America and other nations on this Earth have "looked and listened with shared grief and enormous affection and admiration" (p. 821). Engle explains the power of the inclusive experience, "the

experience of loss and grief is shared by all humans, and that common experience of loss suggests that the ‘subject’ is only a ‘subject’ in relation to others” (p. 62). When the president develops a sense of hardship on the entirety of America, it allows those in Columbine and across the nation to recognize the effect tragedies such as this have on the nation. In defining the event this way the president better manages the tactics of crisis rhetoric and national eulogy as a means of national resilience and community building.

However, in this speech President Clinton does not use an intrinsically powerful word such as “sin”. Instead, he keeps the definition of the event rather ambiguous, noting, “something profound has happened to your country because of this. I want you all to understand that. I'm not even sure I can explain it to you” (p. 821). It is likely that in the month that has passed since the incident many members of the American population saw images of students fleeing the school in a flurry of pain and loss. Therefore, in this case, the lack of a concrete understanding in the immediate month following the incident left open the opportunity for the President to help frame the nature of the event and how the American community should respond to the tragedy. Naming the situation a “profound” event provides a basis for understanding it and determining the appropriate response. Although the president does label this event as profound he does not use as concrete of terms as he did in the Oklahoma City Bombing address. Strategically the shooting at Columbine was not necessarily an attack on the American government but rather against the American way of life and thus is already an ambiguous attack; furthermore, the president is likely seeking further reform for schools and gun control so the necessity of consolation and engaging the public may be second to his future agenda as crisis rhetoric dictates. This helps build community cohesiveness because now the

audience recognizes that they share a common understanding about the event and thus Clinton creates a shared communal moment.

In this speech the President seems to be addressing the people of Columbine High School while still subtly implying the larger scope of the American public. The president often frames the gravity of the situation from the larger American perspective, “when America looks at Jefferson County, many of us see a community not very different from our own. We know if this can happen here, it can happen anywhere” (p. 821). The nature of this quotation does two things. First, it identifies that the American community members are aware of the events in Littleton, declaring that when “America looks at Jefferson County,” they are seeing “a community not very different from our own”. The more profound aspect of this statement is that it suggests that this tragedy is one of great magnitude because, although this is just one of many school shootings, it has had an apparent effect on the larger populous which creates the reality of awe toward those who survived and are coping in the wake of the event. It also implies a sense that the entirety of the American community are at a place of vulnerability through the statement, “we know if this can happen here, it can happen anywhere”, which is a large part of Clinton’s efforts to define the severity of this event. Skillful leaders define the situation in such a way that it will help influence how the audience understands and responds to a crisis. Expanding the population of those affected gives the president more strategic power to use the situation for future government agendas.

One of the last moments of definitional construction of reality happens toward the conclusion of the speech when the president recognizes the power the shooting has on the whole of America: “we know somehow that what happened to you has pierced the soul of

America. And it gives you a chance to be heard in a way no one else can be heard - by the president and by ordinary people in every community in this country” (pp. 821-822). In this instance the president uses imagery as a way of defining the opportunity to change and reform the country that lay before those effected by the Columbine shootings. “Symbolic imagery conveys meaning to the audience and serves as the figurative form to reinforce the theme or idea he is communicating” (Tobey, 1987, p. 56). President Clinton’s imagery conveys that this event has hit the core of the American lifestyle and, thus, the pain experienced by the American community is vast and powerful. Clinton’s explicit recognition that he, as president, is affected by the crisis suggests that this issue is one of monumental importance, worthy of attention from the highest office in the land. This may open up the opportunity to utilize the tragedy in a more deliberative and policy seeking way, much like the tactics of crisis rhetoric allow.

In constructing reality we see President Clinton navigate the tension between national eulogy and crisis rhetoric by including elements of each in his address but ultimately privileging one set of criteria slightly over the other. In the Oklahoma City Bombing address, Clinton frames and uses religious rhetoric as a powerful persuasive definition, situating national eulogy in a predominant position through the use of a priestly tone demonstrated with the use of the defining term sin. The president also places the event on a national scale as dictated by national eulogy rhetoric by framing this event not just as an offense against citizens but rather against the American family and highlighting what Americans are experiencing around the common definition of American perseverance despite the destruction of the tragedy

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, the president utilizes the tactics of crisis rhetoric rather than national eulogy as a means of demonstrating national resilience and ultimately building community around a common definition of the event. The president highlights the ambiguous nature of the Columbine attack on the American way of life, this makes possible the opportunity for the president to help frame how the American community should respond through school reform and gun control. This follows the crisis rhetoric necessity by placing his future agenda above consolation and engagement. Ultimately, between the two addresses we see the president manage the tactics of both forms of rhetoric but, in the construction of reality, the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial address seems to privilege the national eulogy while the Tragedy and Recovery address privileges crisis rhetoric tactics. The next tactic that functions in the wake of the tragedy requires that a rhetor display his eloquence and on some level entertain the community for the sake of creating a lasting and memorable address.

Displaying Presidential Eloquence

The display/entertainment component recognizes that many ceremonial speeches ask the speaker to display a level of eloquence and entertain the audience when speaking. A desirable leader, especially the leader of the nation, knows truth, has the capacity to recognize and use beauty, and is able to manage power. If rhetors can display these functions eloquently, then he or she will stand a good chance of being a leader the community will easily respect and follow. As in the construction of reality, the display function also includes two rhetorical tactics. First, President Clinton uses a priestly tone to demonstrate his presidential leadership and the second tactic is eloquence displayed

through the use of parallel style, repetition, and metaphor. These two categories represent the display and entertainment aspect of epideictic discourse and allow the president to construct a beautiful speech which resonates with the American people.

Demonstrate Presidential Leadership through Religious References

President Clinton shows his eloquence as a speaker by incorporating religious references throughout his speech. “The function of religion is to associate American national identity not just with a certain set of shared beliefs but also with a particular type of shared feeling. The power and truth dynamics of an eloquent speaker can be achieved through the use of religion as the means of creating this shared feeling and cultural constant” (Beasley, 2004, p. 50). A president that is religious has an admirable moral background to an audience and thus more easily gains the trust of his audience. “Religious rhetoric is due to the exigence; if the situation calls for it a rhetoric may call upon reference to the American God as a means of helping the audience understand and cope” (Friedenberg, 2002, p. 36). Leaders such as the president will often express their reverence and faith in God to help the American people through a crisis; unlike other forms of presidential address that may use religious references to signal the American stance of being under the protection of God and the good, the national eulogy uses it to comfort and reassure the public. The use of religious connotations expresses eloquence associated with the truth and beauty components that ultimately act as a sign of leadership. Friedenberg (2002) describes the relevance the president’s reference to religion has during these times of crisis: “in crisis moments government leaders typically

acknowledge the supremacy of God and the importance of religion in the conduct of the lives of individuals and nations” (p. 36).

President Clinton is called forth to speak on behalf of the nation after each of these deadly terrorist attacks. In the events of the Oklahoma City Bombing and the Columbine shooting President Clinton approaches the situation with reverence and adopts a priestly tone as a means of connecting and consoling the audience. In the Oklahoma City Bombing address, Clinton offers three direct religious references from the Bible. The first reference is from the English Standard Version of the Old Testament, Proverb 11:29: “whoever troubles his own house hold will inherit the wind and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart”. President Clinton uses the first portion of the verse as a way to explain the event in terms of both God and tragedy, “Let us teach our children that the God of comfort is also the God of righteousness: Those who trouble their own house will inherit the wind” (p. 573). This quotation suggests that not only is God to act as a protector of the American ideals but he will also serve as the final judge to those who committed these acts of violence. At the time of the speech there was no definitive answer as to who had perpetrated these crimes and thus there was no specific person for President Clinton to accuse and set before God in judgment. The tone of this quotation suggests that President Clinton believes in the importance of justice but that it should be the work of the Lord to cast the ultimate sentence and we as American’s must fall to the Lord for comfort at this time, which takes away responsibility from the American people and their government and places it in the hands of a higher being. This is a mechanism of comfort and consolation to the American community. The president takes on a

pastoral tone that comforts those in pain while still reminding the world that justice will prevail over evil.

The second quotation the president uses is from a letter that Apostle Paul to the Roman's about the tyranny of evil, Clinton states 12:21 which says, "Let us 'not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'" (p. 573). The context in which the president references this quotation is during an explanation that the audience need to rise up against the dark forces of evil and overcome the devastation brought down on our nation by this act of terrorism. The reference also happens at the conclusion of a series of parallel phrasing and punctuates the excerpt in a powerful and poignant manner. The arrangement of words in this biblical verse is reminiscent of one of John F. Kennedy's most famous quotations: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country". This antithesis can emphasize a point and is the most effective when it adds clarity by drawing special attention to the inverted clause or phrase. The quotation states, "not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good", which emphasizes Clinton's primary point of standing up to hate and evil and allowing the nature of goodness inherent to the American people to prevail. It does this by drawing substantial attention to the latter goal of the "good" rather than the evil that many Americans are likely falling into after the loss of members of the national community.

The final direct biblical reference made by President Clinton comes at the conclusion of his personal story of the planting of a dogwood outside the White House in memory of the fallen and injured. The president uses this quotation as a way to describe the symbolic nature of the dogwood: "it embodies the lesson of the Psalms -- that the life of a good person is like a tree whose leaf does not wither" (p. 574). The combination of

religion and metaphor creates connection and visualization for an audience still searching for answers in the wake and confusion of the tragedy. President Clinton is ultimately calling all those who were killed in the attack “good people” and their life will not wither into nothingness because they are “like a tree whose leaf does not wither”. These lessons have been passed down for generations and thus serve as part of our communal heritage and as a community we will never allow the memory of the fallen to disappear, much like the leaves of the dogwood.

The use of religious references in national eulogy help to fulfill the function of enacting a national service for the deaths that resulted from the event or attack. When Clinton uses these direct biblical references, opens his address with the inclusion of God (“we cannot undo it. That is God's work”), and concludes with “thank you all, and God bless you” (p. 574), he makes a connection between God and the will of the American people to continue on in the face of tragedy and preserve American beliefs, heritage, and values.

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, President Clinton’s use of religious references are slightly less blatant and frequent. The choice to include significantly less religious rhetoric is unique to this speech due to President Clinton’s frequent use of biblical references throughout his rhetoric and the religious drama surrounding the entirety of the Columbine events. Students at Columbine had reported that Harris and Kebold had allegedly asked student Cassie Bernall whether she believed in God, she answered yes and then was shot point-blank. Hours after the story emerged, Cassie was hailed a martyr by news media and Christian groups around the world (Bernell, 1999). With all the religious controversy surrounding the Columbine shooting it seems odd that

President Clinton did not use as many biblical quotations; however, the adoption of a priestly tone is generally associated to the national eulogy while crisis rhetoric is more future focused. So in this incident it is likely that the goals of the rhetoric were different than those of the Oklahoma City Bombing.

Nevertheless, Clinton still consoles the audience through this speech, using a Bible verse to do so. The president states: “In the Scriptures, St. Paul says that all of us in this life see through a glass darkly. So we must walk by faith, not by sight. We cannot lean on our own wisdom. None of this can be fully, satisfactorily explained to any of you. But you cannot lose your faith” (p. 821). The president consoles the audience while enacting his presidential leadership by exemplifying that he understands their confusion and pain but that the American community must not lose faith in times like these. Clinton’s plea for the community to move forward rather than become stagnant in pain opens the opportunity for the president to interject an agenda apart from the shooting event alone.

At three other points in the address, Clinton evokes civic religion through the reference to God. Two of these are less poignant than the third, in which the president shares a personal narrative of an experience he has had with another parent who lost a child. President Clinton cites in his address, “His mother and I do not understand this. But we believe in a God too kind ever to be cruel, too wise ever to do wrong, so we know we will come to understand it by and by” (p. 821). This quotation acts as the introduction to the biblical reference the president uses in this address and the purpose of adding this remark is to demonstrate to the audience that in time all wounds heal and that God is on the side of good and thus there must be a logic or point to the deeds done at Columbine

on that day. This again places the president in an excellent position to console the audience while pushing an agenda that may preserve the lives of those who died for all eternity. The second tactic used to display presidential eloquence is through popular mechanisms and rhetorical devices that utilize the writing and construction of high style rhetoric often associated with truth, beauty, leadership, and power.

Display Eloquence through Parallel Style, Repetition, and Metaphor

When one speaks of eloquence they are generally referring to those addresses constructed and executed in high style. The techniques often used in the construction of a high style are concrete words, simile, metaphor, parallelism, and repetition (Donoghue, 2008). In the two addresses of President Clinton one can recognize the frequent use of repetition, parallelism, and metaphor. The flow, beauty, and memorable nature of these speeches are best demonstrated by these techniques and how they function in rhetoric. Zelko (2003) states, “rhythmic structure is not a random technique, it is a carefully planned and executed technique, designed as a basis for better style and for helping to achieve rhythm and cadence in the delivery” (p. 141). The words one chooses as a means of demonstrating a point or developing community do matter as Fahnestock (2005) points out, “because they are well adapted to produce desired effects” (p. 217).

Repetition is a major rhetorical strategy that produces emphasis, clarity, amplification, or emotional effect on the audience. President Clinton uses anaphora, or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of every clause, most frequently. For example the president’s opening passage of the Oklahoma City Bombing address states, “We mourn with you. We share your hope against hope that some may still survive. We

thank all those who have worked so heroically to save lives and to solve this crime ...We pledge to do all we can to help you heal the injured, to rebuild this city, and to bring to justice those who did this evil” (p. 573). This strategic use of repetition alerts the listeners and helps them focus on the important element of each of the utterances; in this case that is the “we” of the passage. Furthermore, the use of inclusive languages creates a bond among the members of an audience and helps in the development of a communal experience (Jenkins & Cos, 2010).

The same rhetorical technique can be seen in two passages of the Tragedy and Recovery address. In this speech, Clinton does not use inclusive language; rather he explicitly tells the audience what they can do in the wake of the shooting:

Because of what you have endured, you can help us build that kind of future, as virtually no one else can. You can reach across all the political and religious and racial and cultural lines that divide us. You have already touched our hearts. You have provoked Hillary and me and the vice president and Mrs. Gore to reach out across America to launch a national grassroots campaign against violence directed against young people. You can be a part of that. You can give us a culture of values instead of a culture of violence. You can help us to keep guns out of the wrong hands. You can help us to make sure kids who are in trouble - and there will always be some - are identified early and reached and helped. You can help us do this. (p. 822)

At only one point in this lengthy passage does the president deviate from the repetitive use of “you can”, where he changes it to “you have.” The entire paragraph gives the audience hope and an agenda of what to do in the coming months, which creates a sense

of communal participation and necessity. The people are given the strength and hope that they are in control of America's destiny and can change the pattern of violence into a community of peace. In this quotation we also see the president empowering the American community by using the pronoun of "you" rather than "us" which at first can feel somewhat jarring to an audience. However, in this case the president is placing the responsibility on the shoulders of the American people to be the change within their cities and communities rather than expecting the government to take care of the problem.

The same feeling of hope can be seen in the second passage that uses repetition of a single word at the beginning of each sentence:

You can help us to build a better future for all our children, a future where hatred and distrust no longer distort the mind or harden the heart. A future where what we have in common is far more important than what divides us. A future where parents and children are more fully involved in each other's lives; in which they share hopes and dreams, love and respect, a strong sense of right and wrong. A future where students respect each other even if they all belong to different groups, or come from different faiths, or races, or backgrounds. A future where schools and houses of worship and communities are literally connected to all our children. A future where society guards our children better against violent influences and weapons that can break the dam of decency and humanity in the most vulnerable of children. (p. 822)

The use of personal pronouns is not limited to this clause alone, the pronoun "us" can be seen in the utilization of another clause of repetition, the president states, "when there is talk of hatred, let us stand up and talk against it. When there is talk of violence, let us

stand up and talk against it. In the face of death, let us honor life” (p. 573). The repetition happens at both the beginning and the middle of the clause with the use of the words “let us” and “when there is”. It is a rhetorical device that not only increases the rhythm and flow of the address but also emphasizes the main point that in the face of death and danger we must continue, this nation must prevail as one. The “as one” aspect is implied through the use of inclusive language of the personal pronoun “us”, “we” or “our”.

The president also utilizes the rhetorical device of parallelism, which means giving two or more parts of the sentences a similar form so as to give the whole a recognizable pattern. Parallelism adds balance and rhythm to the address much like repetition but its most important function is to add clarity to the passage and address. The phrase in the Oklahoma City Bombing which best illustrates this is, “The anger you feel is valid, but you must not allow yourselves to be consumed by it. The hurt you feel must not be allowed to turn into hate, but instead into the search for justice” (p. 573). In this instance in addition to using parallelism the president also utilizes the rhetorical device of antithesis. Antithesis often sounds better if the rhetor ends on the upbeat, emphasizing the positive because the second half of the antithesis is more advantageous for emphasis (Carpenter, 1994). The president contrasts the negative feelings members of the American community may be feeling against those which they should be feeling; this is an eloquent way of helping to shape the community in the wake of these events and to communicate to the audience that the president understands how they may be feeling but that those emotions need not destroy one’s life.

Related to the mechanisms associated with the wording of the speech we can also see instances where the president uses metaphor as a means of creating imagery for the

audience to grasp and remember. “Metaphor offers a new perspective on some thing or idea and thus supplies new modes of social action” (Munsell, 2009, p. 28). Recall that Clinton’s Oklahoma City Bombing address invoked the metaphor connecting the beauty and resilience of the dogwood tree to the healing process America will experience in the wake of the bombing. This particular metaphor suggests that the memory of the dead will, like the roots and branches of the tree, live on within the hearts and minds of the American people. In the traditional eulogistic form, this metaphor uses a tree as a symbol of rebirth and the life beyond that here on Earth. In the national eulogy, the president uses metaphor to demonstrate eloquence and beauty, which allows the audience to visualize the event, and may leave a lasting impression in the minds of the community. This particular form of metaphor takes away the pain an audience member may experience and rather leaves him or her in a place of reassurance that those who died are remembered through the everlasting beauty and resilience of a symbol placed on the lawn of the national capital.

The tension between crisis and national eulogy rhetoric is less pronounced in the display function. Due to the nature of tragic events, both forms of rhetoric call for the president to deliver a memorable and eloquent speech to a confused public. One of the tactics used in the consolation of the community is the use of religious rhetoric to help the American people through a crisis. In responding to both events, President Clinton adopts a priestly tone as a means of connecting and consoling the audience, which is a primary tactic of national eulogy rhetoric. The use of religious references fulfills the function of enacting a national service for the deaths that resulted from the event or attack. The Oklahoma City Bombing address uses three direct bible quotation and several other

references to god as a means of fulfilling this obligation, however, the Tragedy and Recovery address' use of religious references is slightly less obvious and frequent. In the Tragedy and Recovery address the adoption of a priestly tone is generally associated to the national eulogy while crisis rhetoric is more future focused which balances the needs of both forms of rhetoric. This places the president in an excellent position to console the audience while possibly pushing an agenda that may preserve the lives of those who died. In both of the addresses we see the president display his eloquence through parallel style and repetition, as such, the president is able to fulfill both national eulogy and crisis rhetoric's need for an address written and delivered in high style. Ultimately, once again the Oklahoma City Bombing address functions better as a speech of national eulogy while the Tragedy and Recovery address utilizes this genre while still including elements of crisis rhetoric. The final category under consideration is one of the most fundamental to the research presented here, the way in which the president shapes the community in the wake of tragedy.

Shaping Community

The shaping/sharing of community is meant to do exactly as it says: create a sense of shared understanding and unity. Speakers and audiences who seek to fulfill the true promise of the epideictic genre must unite within the boundaries that shape the cultural moment in which they have come together. President Clinton utilizes five rhetorical tactics to shape and share the community in the wake of tragedy. First, President Clinton demonstrates that those who were killed or injured represent the best of America. Second, as a way of developing a sense of sharing within a community a common enemy

is created. Third, he uses past tragic events in America's history to create a common heritage within the community. Fourth, the president's advice for how to move on and rebuild America shapes and gives the community direction. Finally, President Clinton uses narrative as a means of shaping and sharing community. The first area to be considered is how the president shapes the community with a demonstration on how those who died represent the best of America.

Frame that those who were Killed or Injured are the Best of America

The president shapes the community by demonstrating that those who were killed or injured in the event represent the best of America. Both of these events were instances of intentional violence brought against American citizens and communities. In the Oklahoma City Bombing, the man responsible for the bombing, Timothy McVeigh, stated the reason for the attack was in retribution of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearm's attack at Waco, Texas on April 19, 1993, two years prior to the bombing. McVeigh watched the Branch Davidians' compound battered and burned into oblivion. This event beyond outraged McVeigh and his partner Terry Nichols so much that they decided they had to stop the ATF, that they would have to make a stand. McVeigh was convinced ATF agents were working at the Murrah Federal Building and they would pay the ultimate price for what had happened in Waco (Michael & Herbeck, 2001). Each person who was killed or injured on that day symbolized an attack on American government, though his rhetoric the president must reclaim these symbols from the terrorists that threatened to hurt American life. The president does this by honoring the dead and those

who worked to save them and turn them into symbol of goodness rather than destruction (Campbell & Jamieson, 2005).

In the Oklahoma City Memorial address, there are two explicit moments where the president references the wholesome and caring nature of the victims of the Oklahoma Bombing and how they represent America in the most positive way. The first of these references comes within the initial statements of the address where the president states:

This terrible sin took the lives of our American family, innocent children in that building, only because their parents were trying to be good parents as well as good workers; citizens in the building going about their daily business; and many there who served the rest of us -- who worked to help the elderly and the disabled, who worked to support our farmers and our veterans, who worked to enforce our laws and to protect us. Let us say clearly, they served us well, and we are grateful (p. 573).

In this instance the president highlights the kindness and morality of the parents and children in the building that day and how they represent everything that is righteous and good in this country because “they served us well, and we are grateful”. Therefore, those who were killed do not symbolize a man standing up for his country and rights, but rather the loss of honor and innocence that is bestowed in all Americans. The president pays homage to those who died on that day by commenting on the service that they did for this nation and the gratitude we feel toward them and their families. The president recreates the event into a symbol of courage and selflessness and the best that America has to offer. The recognition of the virtues and goodness present in the victims of the bombing remind the American community of the good within themselves and recreates a bond between all

members of the national collective through these shared values. The recognition of the best of America helps to restore a sense of order to the community as it was prior to the attack. The goodness bestowed on this community that can be representative of the sharing of entirety of America can also be seen in the quotation Clinton uses in his address from the Oklahoma Governor Keating, “If anybody thinks that Americans are mostly mean and selfish, they ought to come to Oklahoma. If anybody thinks Americans have lost the capacity for love and caring and courage, they ought to come to Oklahoma” (p. 573). Again, this demonstrates the nature of America and what we need to come together to preserve.

Clinton uses similar tactics in the Tragedy and Recovery address when the president reclaims the symbols that the two young terrorists attempted to steal and remakes them into the representation of American values the community can unite together to preserve and honor. It is hard to say what symbol Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris had intended on attacking; a variety of theories as to the cause of the violence have been postulated, including, being bullied in school, violent video games, violent movies, music, racism, goth, problematic parents, and depression (Cullen, 2009). The boys intended to cause disruption and chaos due to the hatred and anger they had toward conformity and, as such, the Columbine massacre changed the way society looked at children and at schools; violence was no longer just an after-school or inner-city activity. The president had to enact his leadership and take back the destruction and pain that these students brought upon America and return to ordered life. Due to the overwhelming affect that this event had on the entirety of the Littleton community and the fact that some members of the audience were injured victims of the attack, the president widens the

discussion to how the community and public school system represents the best of America. For instance, Clinton declared: “And we see with admiration the fundamentally strong values and character of the people here, from the students to the school officials, to the community leaders, to the parents” (p. 821). Later, he claimed, “this is a very great country. It is embodied in this very great community, in this very great school, with these wonderful teachers and children and parents” (p. 822). The president’s comments explicitly label those people and the community of Littleton great and of sound character and invites the American public to see the symbol of their community in the members of Littleton. Thus, the president reclaims the pain the attack on community life left in the minds of the American people into emotions and memories that demonstrate and represent everything good about America and its ideals. The president also shares with the community by rhetorically generating a common enemy for the nation to collaborate as a community to fight.

Create a Common Enemy

Nations need enemies. The president and governmental agencies use the rhetorical creation of a common enemy as a method of self-control, of reinforcing the values of our governmental system, and of gaining participation in the maintenance of those beliefs. “Despite political, economic, and social differences Americans become a collective subject bound by their disassociation with a common enemy” (Lohmann, 2009, pg 6). The need to create identification among American community members against a common enemy following a tragic event is a particularly important and salient issue for the president to address to the nation (Sommerfeldt, 2010). At the time the president

delivered his Oklahoma City Memorial address, there was limited information as to who or why the suspected perpetrators committed the act of terrorism on the Murrah building that day. So the president faces the unique challenge of creating a common enemy for the American people to rally around without having one to specifically attach blame. The president uses ambiguous identifying terms to create this sense of antithesis. Early in the address, Clinton creates an environment of collectivity among Americans to pursue justice against the perpetrators, “We pledge to do all we can to help you heal the injured, to rebuild this city, and to bring to justice those who did this evil” (p. 573). Rather than telling the audience that we will work collectively to overcome this tragedy, the president chooses to use the phrase “bring justice to those who did this evil,” creating an “other” for the American community to come together to fight against.

This process of identification against a unified enemy becomes more explicit later in the address. In particular, the president not only identifies an ambiguous enemy, he also provides the reason that the American community should come together to destroy it: “I say, one thing we owe those who have sacrificed is the duty to purge ourselves of the dark forces which gave rise to this evil. They are forces that threaten our common peace, our freedom, our way of life... Justice will prevail” (p. 573). Americans who have been hailed by Clinton’s rhetoric are now given a task, to unite as one against the “dark forces” that gave rise to this evil. By using the term “dark forces” to describe what “gave rise to this evil” the president is evoking an archetypal metaphor that creates a true sense of the nature of this enemy. Osborn (1967) discusses the nature of the light and dark type of metaphors, “when light and dark images are used in a speech, they indicate and perpetuate the simplistic, two-valued, black and white attitudes that rhetoricians and their

audience tend to prefer” (p.117). Terms associated with light and darkness express strong judgments and thus elicit significant value responses within the audience of Americans. By using the term “dark” in association to the forces that the American people need to rally against he is associating them to feelings of fear, death, and the unknown, which are all strong negatives and incite the American community. The president also uses the “we” in the quotation to refer to the entire American community because he opens this quotation with “to all my fellow Americans beyond this hall”, which creates a sense of coming together as a community across the entirety of the nation. The enemy we are fighting is not specific but by portraying Americans’ need to fight against national outsiders, the president stresses identification among the insiders.

The president continues by setting out a specific plan to achieve the prevention of the rise of these dark forces that threaten the American community, “Let us let our own children know that we will stand against the forces of fear. When there is talk of hatred, let us stand up and talk against it. When there is talk of violence, let us stand up and talk against it. In the face of death, let us honor life” (p. 573). This statement creates the sense of unification that spans across political, economic, and social differences among the American people who now become a collective subject bound by their disaffiliation with the common enemy of hatred, violence, and death.

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, the president creates a common enemy to unite the community in a similar manner to that of the Oklahoma Bombing Memorial address. The events at Columbine create a slightly different situation for the president to overcome when developing a common enemy for the American people to identify against. In this case, the two offenders were identified and had committed suicide at the

end of their tyranny. Once again we see the president faced with an event that calls for the creation of an ambiguous enemy to help spark a sense of identification against a common opposition. The necessity of the ambiguous enemy may help in the president's future agenda measures on gun control to be more readily accepted by an injured public. To do so the president must maintain that, despite the death of the actual perpetrators, there is still an enemy out there to destroy. The enemy of fear, rage, and anger is not developed until toward the end of the address, meaning the last impression the president would leave on the American public was the rising up and fighting against a common enemy. The president offers a small narrative to help drive home the nature of the enemy America faces:

One thing I would like to share with you that I personally believe very much: These dark forces that take over people and make them murder are the extreme manifestation of fear and rage with which every human being has to do combat. The older you get, the more you'll know that a great deal of life is the struggle against every person's own smallness and fear and anger - and a continuing effort not to blame other people for our own shortcomings or our fears. (p. 822)

The president uses the same symbolic enemy of “dark forces” to help bring together the American people and give a unifying factor among the community. In labeling murder, fear, rage, and blame as “dark forces” the president is again evoking the archetypal metaphor that creates a true sense of the nature of this enemy. Additionally, the label “dark forces” suggests a deeper, darker, more sinister problem that is slowly creeping into the American community and way of life. Clinton suggests that the entire American community is implicated by these acts by using the ambiguous idea of “forces”; this

rhetorical description indicates symptoms of deeper, more sinister powers at work waiting to strike anytime and anywhere.

The president takes the same trajectory of the feelings associated with this archetypal metaphor by referring to “awful conclusion” of events at Columbine High School as “a demon we have to do more to fight. And what I want to tell you is, we can - together” (p. 822). The entire purpose of creating a common enemy is to unify the American community and reinstitute the values the president deems the most important and necessary and this quote demonstrates this unification perfectly. The president offers the dark enemy once more through the label of a demon we need to fight, and he completes his sentence with “we can- together”. This demon is readily projected onto external sources which are then conjured as evil and defined as the public enemy. The devil and his demons are an essential antagonist in the nation's civic religion and “has had a long and notable history in national dramas playing the part of the enemy” (Ivie & Giner, 2007, p. 581). To come together to destroy this demon-enemy is to reaffirm the nation's special virtue as a chosen people destined to overcome death and destruction so that America may prosper prevail (Ivie & Giner, 2007). The inclusive language also mandates that those who want to rally against this demon of hate and murder should join the president as a community to fight.

The final example of the president uniting the community against a common enemy is when the president references specific governmental initiatives intended to fight violence like the members of the Columbine community experienced, “You have provoked Hillary and me and the vice president and Mrs. Gore to reach out across America to launch a national grassroots campaign against violence directed against

young people” (p. 822). In this case there is an explicit community-based group that is fighting against violent acts directed at young adults in America. It gives the audience a way to join up and fight against the common enemy that the president has created through his rhetoric. When a community is drawn together around a common purpose, the president can better shape community identification in the wake of tragedy which possibly offers a stronger American populous that may be more receptive to future policy endeavors based on their understanding of the necessity of “a grassroots campaign against violence” to fight against the evil motives of a common enemy. Knowing that the president and vice president, the highest leaders in the country, are working together to prevent future violence provides the sense of comfort necessary to fulfill the tactics and goals of the national eulogy. The third tactic used to shape the community is the use of collective memory of recent tragedies in American history to create a shared past for the community to share in together.

Share Past Tragic Events in America

One of the primary ways a community is constructed is through shared values and a shared past, therefore, the use of historical events as a means of definition allows the national audience to recognize their status as a community. In the Oklahoma City Bombing address, President Clinton references the volume of letters he received in the wake of the event and, as he states, “One stood out because it came from a young widow and a mother of three whose own husband was murdered with over 200 other Americans when Pan Am 103 was shot down” (p. 573). The president goes on to share the advice she gave to all those listening to his address. This statement references something that

most of the audience lived through and remembers. On December 21, 1988, Pan Am flight 103 was destroyed by a bomb, killing all 243 passengers and 16 crewmembers. Eleven people in Lockerbie, Scotland, also died as large sections of the plane fell in the town and destroyed several houses, bringing total fatalities to 270 (Whitney, 1988). That event came seven years before this Oklahoma City Bombing and also resulted in the loss of innocent American citizens, allowing the president to draw connections in the minds of those who remember the loss of that flight and those trying to understand what had happened in Oklahoma City. This connection creates a sense of community through the recognition of a shared past and a shared sense of grief and loss. The purpose of including this young widow's remarks is to share the words of someone who knows what it feels like to loss a loved one in an unexpected and violent manner, she states:

The anger you feel is valid, but you must not allow yourselves to be consumed by it. The hurt you feel must not be allowed to turn into hate, but instead into the search for justice. The loss you feel must not paralyze your own lives. Instead, you must try to pay tribute to your loved ones by continuing to do all the things they left undone, thus ensuring they did not die in vain. (p. 573)

This quotation allows the president to console the audience through the words of someone who in recent American history has felt that same level of pain and confusion. She offers the audience advice for how to preserve the lives of those who died so that they will not be forgotten. The memory of her husband's death in the Pan Am 103 flight lives on in her immortal words and thus those in the American community must do the same for the Oklahoma City Bombing victims. In this way, we see that the vision of the American community spans not only distance but also time and heritage.

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, the president specifically references a variety of tragic events that occurred both domestically and beyond America's borders during his tenure as president as a means of creating a shared past. Early in the address the president conveys that "part of our job in these last six years, more than we ever could have imagined when we moved to Washington after the election in 1992, has been grieving with people" (p. 820). President Clinton then goes on to list the wide arrange of events that have occurred during his tenure as president:

After the Oklahoma City building was blown up, and the embassies were blown up, and our airmen were killed in the bombing in Saudi Arabia, and so many other occasions, several times after violence in schools. One of the incidents of school killing last year occurred in my home state. It's a small state. I was governor there 12 years. I knew the people involved; it was heartbreaking (pp. 820-821).

The Oklahoma City Bombing happened five years almost to the day prior to the Columbine shooting and had a profound effect on the American community and left a mark on the minds of most Americans. The embassy bombing happened on August 7, 1998, eight months before the Columbine shooting. Terrorists bombed two United States embassies in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, causing the deaths of 258 people and injuring more than 5,000 people (McKinley, 1998). The attack in Saudi Arabia happened three years before Columbine, on June 25, 1996, when terrorists bombed a housing unit near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing nineteen Air Force personnel and injuring 400 other Americans (Jehl, 1996). As each of these events happened within a few years before the events in Littleton, many members of the American audience were likely able to recall the terror they left in their wake. More importantly for Clinton's

purposes, they were also able to recall the fact that America has prevailed and in some sense, become stronger. This allows the audience to create connections to one another and to past events of a similar nature.

In addition to highlighting the determination of the American people to come together and survive these incidents, these examples also serve a higher purpose for crisis rhetoric. Clinton's final statement about the school shooting in his home state is where the president begins to gain rhetorical power by focusing on information that may increase adherence to values that might later support legislative arguments. He states, "And all America grieved. But I think they thought 'oh, this is terrible. I wish somebody would do something about this'" (p. 821). This quotation sets up possible future evidence to an argument the president could make about creating a safer school environment or creating stricter gun control laws. He has demonstrated that violence is part of the American history but that in the aftermath of these deadly school shootings the American community wishes something could be done, throughout the rest of the address the president focuses on possible long-term intentions rather than just discussing the immediate interests of the audience. It is rhetorically strategic for the president to establish that American citizens are seeking future changes to policy and gun legislation rather than resting the entire issue on the desires and initiatives of the Clinton Administration. In this sense, Clinton frames gun control as the wishes of American citizens; the president is merely aligning himself with the power and wants of the American people.

Furthermore, by discussing the connection he had with that event, he creates identification with those members of the audience who were affected by or survived the

events in Columbine. He has attempted to show that he too has lived through the torture that they are experiencing so he is associating himself with the identity of one who knows and understands their pain, and thus comes to the American people as an empathetic leader helping to guide the community through the event. This identification and “imagined banding together is constructed as a positive, nation building experience” (Engle, 2007, p. 75). This allows the shaping of a community through a shared history and a shared understanding and definition of what has happened and how it affects the larger American community. In addition to shaping and sharing in community through remembering the past tragedies that have left scars on the American collective, the president also gives the community advice and direction for how to move on in the wake of tragedy to rebuild the nation.

Give Advice on How to Rebuild America

Presidents faced with a devastated and confused community in the wake of tragic events must offer some type of rhetorical reconstruction or rebuilding of the community to show America’s strength. “Rebuilding here is not just a plan for re-mounting physical structures; it involves establishing a rhetorical vision for the state of existence” (Griffen-Padgett & Allison, 2010, pg. 381). Both of these tragedies caused a disruption to American life and many citizens were looking to the president to restore a sense of normal life and order to communities across the nation. In the Oklahoma City Memorial we see several points where the president instructs the community on how to begin the healing and rebuilding process of America. I have already referenced the first of these examples, the quotation from the Pan Am 103 widow, for its other rhetorical strategies

but it also includes instructions from the president on how to move forward. The president shifts the thoughts and feelings of the American community away from those of hatred and anger and instructs them to continue growing and moving on in the wake of the destruction. “Instead, you must try to pay tribute to your loved ones by continuing to do all the things they left undone, thus ensuring they did not die in vain” (p. 573). The president uses a similar rebuilding and restorative tactic shortly after when he states:

I say, one thing we owe those who have sacrificed is the duty to purge ourselves of the dark forces which gave rise to this evil....Let us let our own children know that we will stand against the forces of fear. When there is talk of hatred, let us stand up and talk against it. When there is talk of violence, let us stand up and talk against it. In the face of death, let us honor life. (p. 573)

Again, in this instance, we see the president symbolically recognizing the communal need to “stand against fear” and “stand up and talk against” fear, violence, and hatred. This rhetorical choice helps to limit the offensive nature of by maintaining a positive image of future interactions and conversations between the public and crisis leaders, which helps the American community make sense of the event (Seeger & Griffen-Padgett, 2010). Those affected by the crisis understand the proper response and the vision the president holds for America in the wake of the events. The president’s statement to the American public gives them direction on how to proceed after the incident, which helps to restore faith in a system by reconnecting the audience to a core set of beliefs and values (Seeger & Griffen-Padgett, 2010).

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, the president offers similar restorative strategies for the students of Columbine and the entirety of the American community to

undertake. “While there are identifiable victims of these events, there is a wider public and audience that is also traumatized and therefore, must be included in the response dialogue” (Seeger & Griffen-Pagett, 2010, pg. 133). The president offers the community perspective and the opportunity to move forward through his rhetorical choices. The first example of the president creating a rhetorical vision for the future of America comes early in the speech where the president states:

We cannot do what we need to do in America unless every person is committed to doing something better and different in every walk of life, beginning with parents and students and going all the way to the White House. For the struggle to be human is something that must be a daily source of joy to you, so you can get rid of your fears and let go of your rage and minimize the chance that something like this will happen again. (p. 822)

The president creates a collective necessity for the entirety of America to do something better for America and let go of any fear and rage “beginning with parents and students and going all the way to the White House.” The president ensures that the process of rebuilding the value system and belief in America requires the dedication from every member of the national community. He then goes on to highlight the behavior that he deems necessary to reinstate order in the wake of the Columbine tragedy, “...let go of your rage and minimize the chance that something like this will happen again”. To fulfill one of the fundamental tactics of national eulogy the president must reiterate how the American government and community can work together to prevent future attacks of a similar nature; in this speech the president is seeking the elimination of gun violence and the protection of the American way of life. Through this statement he provides the

mechanism of letting “go of your rage” as a preventive measure to future events and ultimately the protection of the entire nation.

President Clinton gives the audience specific direction in the paragraph that follows to continue reconstructing the community:

Because of what you have endured, you can help us build that kind of future, as virtually no one else can. You can reach across all the political and religious and racial and cultural lines that divide us. You have already touched our hearts. You have provoked Hillary and me and the vice president and Mrs. Gore to reach out across America to launch a national grassroots campaign against violence directed against young people. You can be a part of that. You can give us a culture of values instead of a culture of violence. You can help us to keep guns out of the wrong hands. You can help us to make sure kids who are in trouble - and there will always be some - are identified early and reached and helped. You can help us do this. (p. 822)

In this incident the president offers specific ways in which the audience can come together return life to normal and prevent the potential for future attacks and maintain a culture of peace rather than violence. The repetitive use of “you can help us” also empowers the audience to take control of the American destiny with the president and to create change on a communal and interpersonal level. The use of “us” in the repetition demonstrates that the president is prepared to participate in the change in our country beyond just the development of his grassroots campaign to acting as a member of the American collective and community that through this address he is shaping and sharing.

Relationships are built through the grassroots campaign that promotes bonds between kids who are in trouble and through “a culture of values instead of violence”.

Before the president concludes his address, he shares one last mission for the American community to embark upon, “You've got to help us here. Take care of yourselves and your families first. Take care of the school next. But remember, you can help America heal, and in so doing, you will speed the process of healing for yourselves” (p. 822). In this quotation the president prioritizes the family first, but includes the actions of the community as part of the fundamental ways to renew the commitments of the American public. He does this by reiterating the importance in taking care of the public and families first and continuing to progress forward by than addressing the school as a whole and eventually the emotional health of the entirety of America. The president restates the importance of healing as an American community and rebuilding the values that shape the history of our nation. Clinton’s final tactic in the creation and shaping of community is the use of narratives.

The Use of Narrative

The last rhetorical strategy that helps to fulfill the shaping and sharing of the community function of epideictic rhetoric is the use of anecdotes or narrative as a means of creating understanding and collective memory among the members of the American community. The use of anecdotal narrative is not merely a communicative act, but rather it serves an intersubjective experience between speaker and audience. All people live through narrative or story telling; narrative practice serves the need for mutual understanding among community members trying to coordinate their common tasks

while functioning in the self-understanding of persons (Gross, 2010). In fact, “human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements” (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). As the leaders of our nation, “Presidents act as the chief storytellers for the American people, and as such articulate narratives that emphasize the course the United States should embark upon with the world” (Edwards & Valenzano, 2007, pg. 305)

An anecdote is a short, amusing, or interesting story of a real event or person. These stories are always based on real incidents and people and are told as such. The purpose of anecdotes is to reveal a truth the rhetor is attempting to make more general the incident of its occurrence alone. “Anecdote can come in a variety of forms, such as metaphors, myths, or narratives” (Edwards & Valenzano, 2007, pg. 306). A narrative serves the function of a story created in a constructive format that describes a series of fictional or non-fictional events.

The Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial address we see several points where President Clinton references real people, in real events as a means of bringing the community together under one generalizable truth or value. In previous sections of the analysis, I discussed these three incidents for the other rhetoric devices they represent. The first is the letter the president received from the young widow with words to share with the community, “I’ve received a lot of letters in these last terrible days. One stood out because it came from a young widow and a mother of three whose own husband was murdered with over 200 other Americans when Pan Am 103 was shot down” (p. 573). In

the second example the president states, “if ever we needed evidence of that, I could only recall the words of Governor and Mrs. Keating...” (p. 573) and he continues on to share his wise words. The final instance of anecdote is at the conclusion of the speech where the president shares the story of the young girl, “yesterday, Hillary and I had the privilege of speaking with some children of other federal employees -- children like those who were lost here. And one little girl said something we will never forget. She said, “We should all plant a tree in memory of the children” (pgs. 573-574).

In each instance, the president is recounting an actual event involving actual people as a means of sharing a universal value that the community should engage in and share together. In the instance of the young widow the purpose of the president sharing this story is to bring the audience together under the assumption that the hate and anger many Americans are experiencing must not consume them but rather the search for justice and the responsibility of remembering their loved ones must be paramount. Narrative practice serves not only trivial needs for mutual understanding among members attempting to coordinate a common belief or task but it also serves the function of understanding other people and ultimately coming together to understand oneself and his or her place within the American community. The process of understanding the perspective of the widow allows members of the national community to reflect upon their own status and point of view and ultimately put aside their prejudice and hatred to the betterment of the entirety of America. The president utilized narrative’s ability to highlight perspective and shared understanding through the anecdote of the young women and as such shapes the community in a consoled and more understanding position.

The sharing of the quotation of Governor and Mrs. Keating demonstrates the perseverance and quality of Oklahoma through the words of a person who has lived there and represents the state on the national level. In this case the audience is able to receive a certain image of Oklahoma, their leadership, and their way of life through the eyes of a man who lives and breathes the lifestyle of the state. From the perspective shared through this narrative, each member of the American community is able to translate the message delivered through the story into their social reality, and thus dramatic stories constitute the fabric of reality for those who listen and attend to their message (Fisher, 1984). Through this story the entire national community is now able to share in the same reality as the community of Oklahoma and as such make it part of their reality and shared understanding of the horrendous event that took place in a simple, everyday American town. Each American now feels as if they are an honorary member of the Oklahoma community through the positive and uplifting description provided by the governor. This story acts to put the events of one state on the national radar and make the entirety of the American public emotionally invested and involved. As Fisher explains of the importance of narrative to the human experience and communal understanding of reality “The character of the narrator(s), the conflicts, the resolutions, and the style will vary, but each mode of recounting accounting of the story is but a way of relating a truth about the human condition” (Fisher, 1984, p. 6). The truth of the American and Oklahoma condition is that those who find that Americans are “mostly mean and selfish” or that American’s have “lost the capacity for love and caring and courage” would be sorely mistaken if they came to Oklahoma. This reality is the truth of the human condition that both Governor Keating and President Clinton want to leave with an audience coming to

understand the extent of the damage and to reinstitute their understanding of American values and beliefs.

Finally, the implications of using the young girl's story and metaphor have been discussed in detail for their rhetorical importance but it also helps to show the range of the effects of such a tragedy. It has affected even the youngest generation due to the number of children who were killed in the bombing and the quotation shows how this association was made, "children like those who were lost here". As the president, Clinton is taking up his role as chief storyteller and articulates important themes of the American story that he wishes the audience to remember and reflect upon as a collective community. A story is able to fulfill this purpose because as Fisher states, "narratives enable us to understand the actions of others because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives" (Fisher, 1984, p. 10). These narratives can surpass time and location to provide moral regulation and values necessary to maintain the American lifestyle. The story the president shares shows the innocence and selflessness of a child to think of others in moments of devastation. Audience members, "can develop social and collective identities only if they recognize that they maintain their membership in social groups by way of participating in interactions, and thus that they are caught up in the narratively presentable histories of collectivities" (Gross, 2010). The longevity of the dogwood and its "its wonderful spring flower and its deep, enduring roots" becomes part of America and her community's collective understanding and history. As a member of the American community who has just suffered a great loss and tragedy, this tree represents the long road to recovery and understanding of the tragedy. The inclusivity of these examples help to develop a sense

of sharing for the community since the evidence presented in these narratives are from American citizens, who before this event had little or no notoriety to the mass American public. The presentation of information from real Americans who have experienced tragedy or know the Oklahoma community helps to reinforce these histories and values that maintain these social groups and the American community.

In the Tragedy and Recovery Address we see two points where the president shares a long anecdote with the audience. One of these instances is toward the beginning and has already been referenced in the analysis; in this excerpt the president recounts an interaction with a father who delivered a eulogy for his young son who had recently died, he said, “His mother and I do not understand this. But we believe in a God too kind ever to be cruel, too wise ever to do wrong, so we know we will come to understand it by and by” (p. 821). The anecdote the president chooses to share comes at the conclusion of a series of statements that praise the Columbine students and community for their ability to move forward and hold their faith; this story acts to punctuate the president's statements. He shares the background information of the tragedy that struck a family already plagued with hardship, but that the father saw that despite the darkness and confusion of the loss of his son he would someday come to understand the meaning of it, “...so we know we will come to understand it by and by”. The sharing of this personal story is also an opportunity for the leader of our country to speak with an individual, personal voice that allows more connection with his audience. Rodden (2007) recognizes the power the use of narrative has on a president’s rhetoric, “He projects a certain image to them, and as his discourse proceeds, they reconsider their impressions of him, filling in the missing links of his arguments, placing it within the context of their own experience and relating it in

their own idiosyncratic way” (p. 3). The audience takes the perseverance and understanding of this story and individualizes it into their own life and thus the story acts to generalize the values of the community to hold onto their faith in the midst of tragedy.

Clinton concludes the Tragedy and Recovery address with a story about an interaction he had with whom he considers “the person who's had the biggest influence on” him. In a short excerpt of the narrative the president shared in his address, Nelson Mandela offers words of wisdom for those dealing with hatred and loss:

And I asked him, “How did you let go of your hatred? How did you learn to influence other people? How did you embrace all the differences in, literally, the centuries of oppression and discord in your country and let a lot of it go away? How did you get over that in prison? Didn't you really hate them?” And he said: “I did hate them for quite a long while. After all, look what they took from me - 27 years of my life. I was abused physically and emotionally. They separated me from my wife, and it eventually destroyed my marriage. They took me away from my children, and I could not even see them grow up. And I was full of hatred and anger.” And he said, “One day, I was breaking rocks and I realized they had taken so much. And they could take everything from me except my mind and my heart. Those things I would have to give away. I decided not to give them away.” (pgs. 822-823)

This story gives way to the president’s last statement of the address: “I see here today that you have decided not to give your mind and your heart away. I ask you now to share it with all your fellow Americans”. The story acts as the historical narrative to the lasting impression the president wants to leave with the community of Columbine and the

American community in its entirety. He shares the story of a man who suffered abuse and the loss of his family every day for 27 years but who never lost his heart and mind to his captors. The American people are struggling to understand how to move past hate, anger, and the search for justice and to accept the events in a manner appropriate and continue with life; this story helps to give the community a beacon of hope and perspective. The selection of a story from Nelson Mandela is rhetorically strategic in that, despite the violence and hatred shown him throughout the twenty-seven years he spent unlawfully behind bars, he came out a stronger and more resilient man because of it. He went on to govern the nation under a philosophy of peace, forgiveness, and nonviolence, a message that the president is trying to inspire *his* nation to believe and honor. Mandela is man who rose up against his own hatred and see past such feelings because “they could take everything from me except my mind and my heart. Those things I would have to give away. I decided not to give them away” (p. 823). The president closes with a reference to this story and allows the community to apply it in their lives and asks those who have lived through the pain to guide the American community to the point where the community can maintain it in his or her mind and heart. This narrative is the way to understand the human experience the president chooses to leave in the minds of the audience as his conclusion.

President Clinton uses several different tactics in attempting create a communal bond among Americans. The two primary goals of each of these sub-genres of rhetoric are through crisis rhetoric’s goal to help guide an American response to restore order and national eulogy goal to console and demonstrate consistency with American beliefs. We again see the navigation of the tension of both these goals in order to help the American

people come to terms with the events. The Oklahoma City Memorial address uses the tactical aspects of the national eulogy by recognizing that those who died represent the best of America, instructing the community on how to begin the rebuilding process of America, and restoring faith in a system by reconnecting the audience to a core set of beliefs and values. These tactics help to facilitate healing and a return to order to all those affected by the tragedy are present. This address possibly demonstrates that the government is working to protect the community against future acts of violence. This creates a renewed sense of faith in America and its communal bond, which ultimately achieves the goals of the national eulogy. The only area that seems directly connected to crisis rhetoric in this speech is the creation of a common enemy that the American community can feel a sense of identification against as a rhetorical means of unifying members around shared values and opinions.

The Tragedy and Recovery address also works to navigate the tensions throughout the shaping and sharing aspects of the address. In representing the best of America, like the national eulogy requires, the president explicitly labels those people and the community of Littleton great and of sound character, he invites the American public to see the symbol of their own communities in the members of Littleton, and he works within the functions of national eulogy to reclaim the pain the shooting had on the community life and in the minds of the American people. Additionally, the president discusses a campaign for the prevention of future youth violence, which provides the sense of comfort for the community knowing the highest offices of our land are looking out for the prevention of future incidents.

In the Tragedy and Recovery address, the president specifically references a variety of tragic events that occurred during his tenure as president as a means of creating a shared past. These examples may also serve a higher purpose for crisis rhetoric because the president gains rhetorical power by focusing on information that will increase adherence to values that might later support legislative arguments. This follows the goals of crisis rhetoric to show that the president is privy to further information and to move the incident beyond the moment to serve future agenda measures. In addition to this tactic of crisis rhetoric, we also see the president create a common enemy to unite the community in the Tragedy and Recovery similar to that of the Oklahoma Bombing Memorial address. In this case the president uses an ambiguous enemy in order to possibly set up arguments for future agenda measures on gun control, which will then be more readily accepted by an injured public. Ultimately in this section we see the most balance between the two forms of rhetoric because each speech utilizes a variety of tactics from each sub-genres of rhetoric. However, we still see the primary purpose of the Tragedy and Recovery address aimed at possible strategic policy-seeking initiatives, whereas the Oklahoma City Bombing address seems more focused on the transformation of the event from one of destruction to national resilience.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This analysis sought to discover how President Clinton, following two domestic crisis incidents, followed the epideictic prescription of constructing reality, demonstrating eloquence, and shaping community. Through the methodology of textual analysis, the wording and construction of the speech were specifically addressed to demonstrate how President Clinton defined the event and shaped the community after the tragedies of the Oklahoma City Bombing (1995) and the Columbine shooting (1999). In this conclusion, I will detail three implications that can be rendered from this rhetorical criticism. Along with the discussion of the key implications of this analysis, I will examine the limitations and areas of future research as a means of furthering one's understanding of this analysis and the potential it has as a key aspect of the future for the epideictic, crisis, and national eulogy genres.

Implications

The purpose of this analysis as discussed in the rationale for this study is three fold; the first being that the critique of domestic crisis rhetoric is an emerging perspective in the rhetorical field. Often one will research the Aristotelian category of deliberative rhetoric in moments of crisis for its justification for future war or legislative endeavors. Traditional notions of epideictic rhetoric have placed it strictly in the category of ceremonial discourse, and although many epideictic addresses do maintain an air of this notion, through analyses such as this the genre has been expanded to encapsulate a variety of other exigencies and elements of oratory. Viewing domestic crisis rhetoric

through this lens is appropriate and offers rhetorical insight as to the choices of community building following situations resulting in the death of innocent Americans. This analysis aids in understanding the function of the president on a more communal level when assisting the American people to come to terms with events that have left a wave of confusion and fear in the minds of the public.

The rhetorical effort to build community maps onto the shaping/sharing function of epideictic rhetoric in particular. This analysis demonstrated five rhetorical tactics that this president utilized in each of the addresses as a means of constructing and shaping a communal bond and understanding after a tragedy. A solid grasp of how a president is able to navigate these emotional and communal situations in a positive and eloquent manner will help a critic in the future study of deliberative moments associated with such events. It is important to see how the president creates the sense of collectivity that leads to the “rally around the president” reaction rather than just recognize its presence in the wake of national devastation. Insight into how a president uses epideictic mechanisms to fulfill the sub-genres of national eulogy and crisis rhetoric has the potential to assist a scholar in future research endeavors into the deliberative category of rhetoric. Pursuing epideictic research projects in addition to the often researched deliberative category furthers the scope and utility of a genre many scholars have previously deemed “entertainment” and “gaudy” discourse.

The second purpose for this analysis was to further the field’s understanding of Clinton’s rhetoric beyond apologia. The analysis of Clinton’s rhetoric beyond that of the often studied area of apologia into the new arena of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric brings insight into a president that was a powerful communicator and leader of our

nation. This perspective was able to demonstrate Clinton's leadership abilities through his rhetorical mastery in moments unrelated to scandal that presented themselves as some of the darkest times in our country. Specifically the president was able to evoke the civic religion of our nation through biblical references placed strategically in the address, the president arranged his speeches with parallel and repetitive phrasing that made the addresses flow in a memorable and eloquent manner, and the president was able to define the events in such a way that the American community fully understood the gravity and effect that these events had left on the entirety of our country. By defining the event and shaping the community in a stronger more resilient manner, and doing so with an air of eloquent leadership, the moments of tragedy did not create rhetorical division and hatred among the American community, but rather cohesion and a pursuit of justice and understanding. Clinton demonstrated that he was a president who engaged in effective communication with the American people; therefore, this study gives insight into the man who excelled at using symbols to build community which furthers the field of rhetorical criticism while building an understanding of the success of a man all too often remembered for his indiscretions.

The nature of these events left the country in shock and the need for a complete understanding of why these moments of violence occurred and what their government was doing to further protect them from future attacks. There is also a high level of confusion and disorder to community life that the president must address and restore to its functioning form in the wake of a domestic crisis. This analysis established the level of dedication President Clinton has for this nation and their collective bond while demonstrating his leadership ability thorough the management of his words to create a

collective understanding of the tragedy as a means of consolation and inciting support for his future agenda measures. Through his use of religious references, his reaffirmation that American is still a strong and great nation, and his construction of a more optimistic and future focused definition of the events, the president reminded the American people of what it means to be an American and enacted his leadership in an eloquent and respectable manner. Clinton's Press Secretary, Michael McCurry, when asked in an interview about President Clinton's Oklahoma City memorial address, stated about the president's response: "...So, we needed a president. And I think by needing a president and by Bill Clinton stepping in and filling that role more than adequately at that moment, that was kind of a turn around moment for his presidency" (undefined, 2001). This is a man that knew Clinton and his role in the nation as well as how the public had viewed the president's ability to lead the nation prior and after the events of the Oklahoma City Bombing and can attest to his success as a leader and speaker in that moment. The perspective and analysis of this research shows how the president demonstrates his superior ability to guide the nation through moments of devastation that are often overlooked by researchers.

This analysis continues the process of navigating away from the often analyzed area of apologia and scandal that has seemingly defined President Clinton's tenure as the leader of our nation. Further analysis into the rhetoric of Clinton may help in the collective shift away from current static evaluations for what happened near the end of his two-term presidency. Changing the collective understanding of President Clinton may allow researchers and Americans to better understand his rhetorical successes and failures, particularly in moments of tragedy and crisis. These two speeches demonstrate

President Clinton's ability to navigate the clear tensions placed on him in the wake of tragic events in order to serve both the needs of consolation and policy measures for our country. These speeches also act as benchmarks to a growing understanding of a rhetorical hybrid in which a rhetor negotiates crisis and national eulogy moments in order to leave a positive impression on the national collective in the wake of devastation. Thus the importance of this analysis is to continue the process of shifting the nation's collective memory of a president who was so much more than scandal, while providing a standard for future studies into the tensions present in the domestic crisis addresses of a president.

The final purpose this analysis sought to fulfill is how President Clinton navigated the tension between crisis and national eulogy rhetoric in moments of tragedy. The incidents in Oklahoma City and Littleton created events that required rhetorical prowess on the part of President Clinton to negotiate the strain present between two forms of rhetoric that are both necessary at the moment of tragedy when American lives are lost. A president will feel a sense of friction in trying to balance both of these forms of rhetoric in the wake of a tragic event so much so that one of these tactics may become more pronounced in any given speech. In crisis rhetoric the focus and goal is to define the troubling event for an audience while exerting leadership power and a previous agenda in the wake of tragedy; national eulogy rhetoric, however, is less concerned with strategy and agenda and more so with the consolation of the audience.

After careful analysis and reflection on each of the addresses, it seems that the president uses both forms of rhetoric to achieve persuasiveness in the wake of tragedy, but that the Oklahoma City Bombing address privileges national eulogy rhetoric and the

Tragedy and Recovery address privileges crisis rhetoric. The overwhelming concern with the creation of a common enemy that will serve future policy initiatives in the Tragedy and Recovery address demonstrates the use of strategic communication that is more calculated and planned. This is the overarching goal of crisis rhetoric. The contextual details of the Columbine address correlate well with the results found in the analysis given that Clinton delivered the Tragedy and Recovery speech thirty days after the event and on the same day as another school shooting in Georgia. The shocking nature of the event had likely worn off at that point and the fact that this event was not an isolated incident in American culture makes it likely that agenda measures take a slight precedence over consolation of the American people. The Oklahoma City Bombing, however, did present itself as a surprising and isolated event that required the president to respond quickly and prioritize the emotional needs of the nation over those of agenda-setting requirements. The president uses his address as an opportunity to unite the community and frame the situation as a circumstance for substantial change or reform. The Oklahoma City Bombing address is much more epideictic in its concern of transforming the moment of tragedy from one of destruction and devastation into a symbol of national resilience. The president's focus on religion and framing the event in a manner that establishes that those who died represent the best of America and its values follows the national eulogy goal of defining the catastrophe on a national perspective while diminishing the pain associated with the event and consoling the American community.

The analysis presented in this research will work to help future rhetorical scholars better understand crisis events that are presented during a president's tenure as Chief

Executive of our country. Indeed, presidential responses to tragic events that claim American lives are not a thing of the past. A contemporary example of such instances can be seen in President Obama's reaction to an unexpected attack on State Representative Gabrielle Giffords. According to Spotts (2011) at *The Christian Science Monitor*, On January 8, 2011, Arizona State Representative Gabrielle Giffords was holding a constituent meeting called "Congress on Your Corner" at the Safeway Supermarket in the La Toscana Village Mall in an unincorporated area of Arizona just North of Tucson. At around ten in the morning at a table outside the store where around 20 to 30 people were gathered, a gunman drew a pistol and shot Giffords in the head. He then allegedly proceeded to fire randomly at other members of the crowd. When the gunman ran out of ammunition and stopped to reload, a bystander clubbed the back of the assailant's head with a folding chair and the shooter was subsequently subdued by several other members of the crowd. The shooting rampage left six people dead, including a nine-year-old girl, 13 others wounded, and the nation shaken. The incident left American citizens in shock and drew attention from the highest office of our country, President Obama. "The reaction from Obama and Washington was swift with President Obama initially calling the attack 'an unspeakable tragedy ... a senseless and terrible act of violence that has no place in a free society'" (Spotts, 2011, para. 7). Obama sent FBI Director Robert Mueller to Arizona to coordinate the investigation into the attack. Three days after the attack President Obama spoke to a shattered audience of more than 14,000 at University of Arizona in Tucson campus. The speech was designed to console and explain the situation to a confused public and, as such, follows the specifications of epideictic, crisis, and national eulogy rhetoric.

The president utilizes all the mechanisms of epideictic rhetoric as a means of defining the situation to the American public, creating and sharing in community, and demonstrating a level of pastoral presidential eloquence required by this particularly disturbing exigence. The president's speech follows with the mechanisms discussed throughout the analysis of Clinton's rhetoric, which confirms the lasting impression, and essential nature of understanding epideictic functioning within the tensions of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric. As the *Huffington Post* (2011) reports, President Obama specifically addresses this need for understanding in his speech when he states, "You see, when a tragedy like this strikes, it is part of our nature to demand explanations, to try to impose some order on the chaos, and make sense out of that which seems senseless". This rhetorical tactic helps in the process of eulogizing the specific victims of the incident while constructing the reality of the situation for the national community.

The president continues this framing and begins the process of sharing in the American community by developing a strong rhetoric of togetherness and the ending of partisanship which is beginning to tear at the seams of our nation. He states, "For those who were harmed, those who were killed - they are part of our family, an American family 300 million strong. We may not have known them personally, but we surely see ourselves in them" (para. 5). The president so boldly draws the connection that those who were killed representing the best of American values by using that specific phrasing early in the speech, "That is the quintessentially American scene that was shattered by a gunman's bullets. And the six people who lost their lives on Saturday – they too represented what is best in America" (para. 5).

The president also utilizes the mechanism of religious devices in his speech to demonstrate his leadership and observe the rhetorical tactics of the national eulogy. President Obama opens the body of his address with a biblical quotation that states, “As Scripture tells us, There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day” (para. 3). The president even closes his address within the framework of this civic religion that helps create and maintain a heritage of the national community necessary for both epideictic and national eulogy rhetoric: “May God bless and keep those we’ve lost in restful and eternal peace. May He love and watch over the survivors. And may He bless the United States of America.” The tensions placed on a president in the moment of tragedy to draw a nation together while still acting in the role of chief executive of our nation creates an interesting rhetorical moment. One can see the rhetorical devices present in the addresses of President Clinton emerging as significant aspects of President Obama’s address. The way President Obama defines reality while working to close the partisan lines ripping our nation apart are all strategies I have uncovered in the analysis of President Clinton’s rhetoric.

Through rhetorical analysis like this, one can come to better understand the function of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric and the way the president is able to construct a speech in these moments. Instances such as these possess the opportunity to analyze rhetoric that is rich in devices and tools that help navigate the grey area between these competing needs. This analysis is one example of how the epideictic genre serves purposes far beyond mere commemoration. Moments of tragedy leave a community in a state of confusion and fear of what will result in the wake of the events, the power a

rhetor has in this moment becomes apparent through the analysis of how a president constructs reality, shapes the national community, and displays a level of presidential eloquence. Through the tactics of the epideictic address the president defines who the community is, while invoking the memories and values of who they were and who they will become in the transitioning period after a tragedy. This reinforcement of communal values and beliefs is what historically defines a nation and thus demonstrates the lasting power of these speeches and why they are fruitful areas of research enterprise. As with any research project there are certain limitations present that may hinder a full understanding of the scope and nature of the research and analysis, the following section will discuss the limitations present in this analysis of Clinton's rhetoric.

Limitations

At the conclusion of any research endeavor there comes a point where one must reflect on the limitations present in the project. The analysis presented here discusses the tactics President Clinton uses in two different crisis incidents that resulted in the loss of innocent American lives, therefore, the analysis is limited to the evidence presented in a small number of samples. It restricts our understanding of Clinton in that we can only garner a limited amount of evidence to understand the epideictic components present in crisis and national eulogy moments where President Clinton works to build and shape community. This restriction makes the results found through the analysis less generalizable to other tragedy and crisis situations.

Another limitation present in this study was the absence of the audiovisual recording of the Tragedy and Recovery address. This analysis focused on the textual

components of the address rather than the delivery components present in the recording of the speech. This presented itself as a limitation to fully analyzing and understanding the eloquence of the president's delivery along with the textual components that demonstrate his beauty and power. The opportunity to analyze more of the contextual, environmental, and delivery aspects of each of the addresses would further our understanding of the formulation of an epideictic address in the moment of crisis that require a national eulogy. The inclusion of the audiovisual recording of the address would act as an excellent avenue for continued and further research into the epideictic genre and President Clinton's rhetoric.

This analysis also addressed the speeches from a more deductive perspective rather than inductive. This presents itself as a limitation because one often assumes the research becomes "cookie-cutter" and predetermined and thus lacks insight into the unique rhetorical aspects present in these moments. An inductive approach to research, where one lets the speeches guide the results rather than using a framework to determine generic and stylistic similarities present in a speech may help to prevent predetermined research. Although this research did combine both inductive and deductive elements, the generic constraints provided by these two sub-genres act as a limitation to the knowledge and insight one may discover.

In addition to using a deductive rationale to the study of President Clinton's discourse the framework of looking for the elements present within the speech rather than recognizing what may be missing from each of these addresses also acts as a limitation to the information one can gain. Discovering what elements are missing in an address can be just as important and intriguing as the analysis of elements present; thus this research

is limited by the lack of recognition of the missing elements of crisis and national eulogy rhetoric within each address.

The final limitation I wish to discuss is the restriction that the use of rhetorical criticism as a mode of understanding communication poses to this analysis and the understanding of Clinton's rhetoric. The practice of rhetorical criticism is not made up of a single method nor do rhetorical theorists all attend to a single school of thought or paradigm. Rhetorical criticism is composed of a variety of critical approaches or points of view that are held together through a common unifying theme or general assumption. That being said, the research one does into a form of rhetorical criticism is limited to the lens the critic chooses to employ as a means of understanding the devices and tactics present in the exemplar. This study is, therefore, limited by the selection of the epideictic genre to interpret what is going on in the address. Another methodology may reveal an entirely different analysis of the addresses, which presents itself as both a luxury and limitation of the rhetorical field. It is full of opportunities to discover the use and implications of language choices at any given moment but that also means that only certain aspects of an address are revealed through an analysis. As Irene Makaryk (2000) states, "rhetorical critics look to whatever theories and methodologies can explain and evaluate the motivations of speakers, the responses of audiences, the structures of discourse, and the changes in a communication environment" (p. 177), which limits the information one can gain from a text while still leaving open the possibility that future research could reveal an entirely new way of understanding a rhetorical text. The following section will highlight various future research endeavors that could be

undertaken to further understand President Clinton's rhetorical ability and crisis rhetoric more broadly.

Future Research

In the same respect as discovering and discussing the limitations presented by a research endeavor, it is also prudent to determine what uncharted areas of research have been uncovered throughout the process of the project. This analysis has created several other avenues for further research into President Clinton, the epideictic genre, and even other methodologies that scholars could use in understanding responses to national tragedies. Future studies might include a wider set of speeches as a means of gaining a fuller understanding and grasp of how Clinton works to develop a speech during these moments of crisis. As stated in the limitations section, an analysis of other Clinton post-crisis responses, such as the first World Trade Center bombing on February 23, 1993, the April 19, 1993 stand-off at Waco, Texas, or the August 7, 1998 bombing of two American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, would help further the rhetorical community's understanding of how a widely respected presidential communicator and an expert of the genre of apologia was able to navigate the tension present between crisis and national eulogy rhetoric.

Similarly, another avenue one may choose to take is to study President Clinton's crisis and national eulogy rhetoric against other presidents. A comparison between some of the monumental national eulogies, along the lines of my analysis of Obama's response to the Tucson tragedy earlier in this conclusion, may help to demonstrate the rhetorical skill of President Clinton against other presidents faced with similar situations. It would

help to develop our understanding of presidential rhetoric and the epideictic genre as it works to utilize the rhetorical strategies related to crisis and national eulogy.

Additionally, there are many different ways to approach the study of crisis rhetoric. Each helps to discover different rhetorical tactics and strategies available for a rhetor to employ. "Crisis communication has been approached from several perspectives including image restoration theory and apologetic discourse, from the perspective of the jeremiad and from the framework of covenant renewal discourse" (Seeger & Griffin-Padgett, 2010, pg. 138). An emerging framework for the study of crisis rhetoric is the discourse of renewal, which focuses on provisional and prospective responses, correcting and learning from problems and mistakes, moving forward, and communicating from a value position. Utilizing this perspective, which is closely associated with the larger tradition of restorative rhetoric, may provide a productive study of Clinton's post-crisis rhetoric for future research projects. This form of analysis was briefly used in the shaping and sharing of community section, but an entire analysis from this perspective would further insight into this emerging subset of restorative rhetoric.

Another perspective that could be utilized in the understanding of President Clinton's post-crisis rhetoric is the rhetorical hybrid used in both John M. Murphy's (2003) article and Bonnie Dow's (1989) article in *Presidential Crisis Rhetoric*. This hybrid genre combines the elements of Aristotle's deliberative and epideictic rhetoric for understanding crisis and national eulogy rhetoric. The combination of these two perspectives help one to understand and analyze the situation, presidential preference, communal needs, or other factors that lead a president to emphasize one genre over another when managing the tactics of the deliberative and epideictic genre when guiding

the United States through a troubling crisis event (Murphy, 2003). This method is slowly emerging as a new way of understanding the constraints and strategic choices used by a president in times that could lead to substantial national change; this would be a particularly interesting perspective to take in the analysis of the Tragedy and Recovery address due to the volume of policy-seeking changes and crisis tactics.

Nevertheless, this thesis serves as a starting point for furthering our understanding of the scope of Clinton's epideictic rhetoric and how it can function in moments of tragedy. President Clinton was called upon in moments of crisis to construct a new reality, display his presidential leadership through his eloquence, and ultimately shape the community into a new and stronger American people. The president's role as national speaker has become more and more prevalent as each new president takes office and it is in times of national distress that the American community turns to the president for reassurance and guidance. President Clinton's rhetoric demonstrates how a president carefully navigates the tension between crisis and national eulogy rhetoric in order to create a communal meaning for the events that is consistent with the audiences preexisting values while simultaneously guiding the response of the nation. Generating a sense of community across America, particularly in moments of peril, is of great importance to the success of our nation. This ever-present responsibility for maintaining community and country is outlined in the words of our forty-second president in his first inaugural address, "Let us all take more responsibility, not only for ourselves and our families but for our communities and our country" (Clinton, 1993, p. 2).

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