THE PRAGMATICS OF THE COLLOQUY IN SELECT SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

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2025

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis titled " The Pragmatics of the colloquy in select speeches of Barack Obama" submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy presents the research I have carried out under the supervision of Dr John Eliezer, Professor (Retd.) and co-supervision of Dr Sukhvinderjit Kaur Chopra, Associate Professor, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. I further declare that I have followed the scholarly conventions of attribution in the thesis and have not submitted it, wholly or in part, to any other institution of higher education for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "The Pragmatics of the colloquy in select speeches of Barack Obama" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English presents the research that Mamta Rana, (41400106), undertook under our supervision, and that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other institution of higher education for the award of any degree.

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Acknowledgement

I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported me throughout the journey of completing this thesis. It has been both a challenging and rewarding experience, and without the assistance and encouragement of many individuals, this work would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my guide, Dr John Eliezer, for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the entire research process. His expertise, patience, and dedication have been crucial in shaping the direction of this thesis, and I am deeply appreciative of the time and effort he invested in helping me grow as a researcher.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my co-guide, Dr Sukhvinderjit Kaur Chopra, whose continuous encouragement strengthened the quality of this work.

I am equally thankful to Dr P.P Singh, Mr Navdeep Dhaliwal, Dr Ajoy Batta for their administrative support and encouragement, which provided the foundation for a smooth research experience.

Finally, I owe my deepest thanks to my husband Mr Sarabpreet Singh,

Ms Mahira Singh, my daughter, who put up with all my absences, my parents, all other family members and friends for their unending encouragement, patience, and support. Their faith in my abilities kept me grounded and motivated through the years of my research.

This thesis is a product of all the support I have received, and I am immensely grateful to each person who contributed to its completion.

Mamta Rana

30 July, 2025

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Barack Obama's Speeches

Sr. No.	Date & Place	Conventional Title	Short Title
1	July 27, 2004, Fleet Center, Boston	2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address	DNC 2004
2	January 08, 2008, Nashua, New Hampshire	New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech	Yes, We Can
3	March 18, 2008, Philadelphia, PA	A More Perfect Union, 2008	A More Perfect Union
4	November 04, 2008, Grant Park, Chicago, Illinois	2008 Election Night Victory Speech	Victory Speech 2008
5	January 20, 2009, Washington DC	President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address	Inaugural Address 2009
6	December 10, 2009, Oslo, Norway	Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize	Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech
7	January 12, 2011, University of Arizona, Tucson	Remarks by the President at a Memorial Service for the Victims of the Shooting in Tucson, Arizona	Tucson Memorial Service Speech
8	March 07, 2015, Selma, Alabama	Remarks by the President at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches	Selma Speech
9	June 26, 2015, Charleston, South Carolina	Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honourable Reverend Clementa Pinckney	Amazing Grace
10	July 27, 2016, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Remarks by the President at the Democratic National Convention	DNC 2016

ABSTRACT

Grice (1968, 1975) presents a theory of conversational implicature to account for the "non-natural" meanings that speaker-hearers infer in one-to-one conversation. He suggested that this theory can "be generalised for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others." Aristotle mentions these very goals in *On Rhetoric* as the purpose of a political speech, which he refers to as "deliberative" or "persuasive" speech, in which an orator "advises about, … those that can be possibly come to pass or not (Aristotle, 1359b;1.4.1)." This study extends Grice's claim about the non-natural meaning to Barack Obama's speeches. A speaker's utterances carry "non-natural meanings" viz., conversational implicature, that his hearer can deduce (Grice 1975, pp. 41-42). The derivation of implicature in utterances is contingent on the prior derivation of presuppositions in them. Therefore, understanding a conversation involves understanding not only literal meanings, but also the unstated presuppositions and implicatures in it. This study extends this claim to the communication between a public speaker and an audience that this study refers to as a colloquy between them. In so far as an audience comprehends the presuppositions in an orator's speech and infers his intended but unstated meanings as implicature, a colloquy is established between them.

Barack Obama's speeches cover a range of topics, including the family, the civil rights movement, politics and policy, and international affairs. The data for this study comes from utterances in his speeches that contain the factive verbs *know* and *realize* and the change of state verbs *begin* and *start*, all of which point to the presuppositions in them. The analysis reveals that a general audience can identify the background that Obama presupposes on various topics, including historical and contemporary events in these utterances, and infer implicatures he intended them to comprehend.

This finding motivates a theory that treats public oratory as a "colloquy" between an orator and his audience. It happens through the cognitive response the audience makes when they comprehend background information in an orator's speech and infer implicatures in it.

The implicatures in a deliberative speech are not conversational, since a speech is not a conversation, making the label "conversational implicature" inappropriate to refer to the class of implicatures that is carried by utterances in

a speech. Therefore, I have termed them **oratorical implicatures**. Grice's Cooperative Principle continue to hold in a political speech. However, the maxim of Quality generalises to a version that shifts its focus from factuality, as in its original formulation, to possibility. Aristotle emphatically asserts that talking about what is possible in a deliberative speech is its only appropriate goal, since "there will be no deliberation" (Aristotle, 1359b;1.4.2) on any other topics. The maxim of Quantity is vacuous in political speeches, as how much information is sufficient in a speech is often determined by the orator's persuasive objectives, rather than any objective measure of informativeness that the orator and audience can bring to bear on this issue. The maxim of Relation remains key, but it is contingent on the orator's creativity, and the maxim of Manner is essential for engaging the audience and avoiding obscurity.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public speaking

The history of public speaking dates back to 621 BC in Athens, Greece where formal bodies called 'assemblies' were constituted to formalise the legal system from the traditional oral system to the written form (*Stand Up, Speak Up*, 2023). Consequently, a legal system detailing written laws started, which spearheaded the establishment of authority with the courts, instead of the nobility. Laws were amended after deliberations which, in turn, led to the birth of a new trend, the requirement of public speakers who were skilful at persuading people to reach agreements in a court of law. According to DeCaro, "In a free society, it is persuasion that decides rules, determines behaviour, and acts as the governing agent in human physical and mental activities" (*Stand Up, Speak Up*, 2023). Thereafter, democracy took precedence, wherein eloquent speakers who were interested in politics and public speaking saw a golden opportunity in using their speaking skills for winning votes by persuading people to vote for them and ultimately lead their states or countries. This also led to the emergence of the study of the field of rhetoric, the art of public speaking. Most studies of public speeches are undertaken from the rhetorical standpoint of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

The use of the term "public speaking" to name a distinct field occurred relatively late in English, not surfacing until the 18th century, as noted by Sproule (2012). He outlines the evolution of public speaking from the elocutionary approach, characterised by meticulous rules for pronunciation and gesture, to a more practical, audience-centered model, a "paradigm shift towards a more democratic oral rhetoric" (Sproule, 2012, p. 563). He also states that these changes happened after the release of Rippingham's *Publique Speaking* in 1813 through Winans's *Public Speaking* that came in 1915.

Public speaking holds the immense potential to carry forward transformative change or spark a revolution. Political orators can and do impact the audience. They do so by employing a set of tactics, as the following ones.

> "Nine of the tactics are verbal: metaphors, similes, and analogies; stories and anecdotes; contrasts; rhetorical questions; expressions of moral conviction; reflections of the group's sentiments; three part lists; the setting of high goals; and conveying confidence that they can be

achieved. Three are non-verbal: animated voice, facial expression, and gesture." (Antonakis et al., 2012, p. 127)

Rhetorical strategies and their effectiveness apart, the appropriateness of rhetoric in a political system is as old as the ancient Greek philosophers. Plato denounced rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* (McAdon, 2004, p. 21) while Aristotle "appreciated its multiple forms 2400 years ago" (Dryzek, 2010, p. 319). Plato's misgivings notwithstanding, rhetoric has contributed to political systems. Dryzek generalizes, "Rhetoric facilitates the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audiences divided in their commitments and dispositions." Later in the same paper he enumerates these subjects to include

> "generation of legitimacy for collective decisions, effective resolution of complex social problems, promotion of social justice, tractability in social choice, positive freedom, promotion of individual and collective political competences, healing of deep social divisions, and facilitation of reflexivity in the steering capacity of society." (Dryzek, 2010, p. 332)

This catalogue matches the topics that Obama spoke on in his speeches throughout his political career, including the speeches explored in this study. It is safe to say that Obama takes his place in a long and illustrious tradition of public speaking.

How then does public speaking derive its efficacy and capacity to generate powerful emotions in audiences and, as it has happened in the past, changed the course of history? The present research addresses this question, leading to a theory of public speaking through the lens of pragmatics. It analyses the effects of Barack Obama's speeches, by extracting pragmatic meaning from his speeches over and beyond their literal or semantic meaning. Grice's theory of conversational implicature (1968, 1975) provide the theoretical underpinnings for this study. Obama's speeches also instantiate the rhetorical appeals Aristotle posited as being indispensable for persuading an audience to a cause. To this end, the study demonstrates that the effectiveness of appeals derives from their pragmatic interpretation.

A public speaker engages with his audience in a one-to-many oral communication. In this situation the response of the audience is cognitive, and it is often expressed through phatic responses, like cheering, clapping and the like.

This communicative mode is different from a conversation between two or more interlocutors in a narrow space than that which typically exists between an orator and his audience. Cook (1989) outlines the conditions defining talk as a conversation, emphasising "the suspension of unequal power dynamics, small participant size, and short turn-taking within the interaction" (p. 51). Despite arguments suggesting that outcome-oriented speech dominates conversations, Fairclough (1989) contends that conversations persist even in situations in which participants have unequal power. Examining the structure of conversation, Cutting (2008) states that it takes place in "strings of related and combined utterances (p. 22)." She adds that there are two approaches to the structure of discourse, namely the "Exchange Structure" (ES) that analyses "overall patterns," while people are speaking and the "Conversation Analysis" (CA) in which speakers dominate the response of the hearer and they take turns during their interactions. Cook (1989) defines talk as a "conversation when:

1. It is not primarily necessitated by a practical task;
2. Any unequal power of participants is partially suspended;
3. The number of participants is small;
4. Turns are quite short;
5. Talk is primarily for the participants not for an outside audience (p. 51)."

Cook states that on the basis of this definition conversation is "outcome oriented" (p. 51), whether it is at casual parties or while talking to a friend. Fairclough (1989) contends that conversations take place even when there is "any unequal power of participants." As the interactions move further there are certain patterns which recur. Linguists identify these recurring patterns as turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and sequences within conversational interactions.

These patterns do not apply to a public speech. Therefore, public speeches are not conversations as they have been defined and researched in the literature on CA.

Dialogic theory

Contrary to the traditional view of public speaking as a monologue, many scholars argue for a dialogic perspective, emphasising the interaction between the speaker and the audience (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The dialogic theory posits three overarching principles: "dialogue is more natural than monologue,

meanings reside in people rather than words, and contexts and social situations influence perceived meanings" (Green et al., n.d.). This theory views public speaking as a dialogue, focusing on how a speaker conveys a message and how the audience interprets it, contrasting it with a monologue, where the speaker communicates in a one-way manner. Since language influences culture, the socio-cultural components encompassing the audience's personality, beliefs, actions, attitudes, languages, social status, past experiences, and customs collectively constitute the realm of experience that influences the dialogue in public speaking (Bakhtin 2001a; Bakhtin 2001b). Therefore, the dialogic theory delves into the social-psychological and cultural dimensions of public speeches (DeVito, 2016, p. 215). This perspective transforms public speaking into a dynamic dialogue, between a speaker and their audience, where the audience accurately elucidates what the speaker conveys through their words. Yakubinsky (1997) contends that public speaking scenarios frequently transform into dialogues when audience members actively participate by posing questions, emphasising the role of nonverbal cues, such as nodding in agreement or displaying disapproval, serve as feedback for speakers, building a sense of dialogue. This dialogue encourages speakers to be more involved and attentive, cultivating a more engaged and responsive audience.

However, the dialogic theory emphasises that even though public speaking is inherently dialogic, it does not explain how the conversation between a speaker and an audience happens at the cognitive level between orator and audience.

Public speeches as *colloquy*

Even though a public speech is not a conversation, it is still dialogic in the specific and restricted sense it has in dialogic theory. Therefore, it is imperative to use another word as a term of art in this study to characterise the communication established by means of a public speech. I show that colloquy is appropriate for this purpose. This section establishes that *colloquy* characterises the fundamental nature of public speeches by referring to its etymology and contrasting it with the etymology of *conversation.* The Ngram are "contiguous sequences of n items (in this case words) from a given sample of text or speech," (DeepAI, n.d.). The Ngram of *colloquy vs conversation vs dialogue*, interpreted with their definitions, show that *colloquy* carries less of the

breadth of use and conceptual content that *conversation* or *dialogues* do. Most importantly, since every utterance in a speech or subunit of it triggers a cognitive response in an audience, this perspective suggests itself as a methodology for the study of speeches as extended, one-to-many communication.

Note on the etymology and word history of *colloquy*

According to the OED, *colloquy* originates from the Latin word *colloquium*, which means "speaking together, conversation, conference," derived from *col-* (together) and *-loquium* (speaking). The use of the word *colloquy* dates back to 1581 derived from *-loqui* (to speak), "talking together," "a conversation" or "converse (without plural), dialogue." The OED supports these etymological details with the illustrative quotations given below.

Figure 1

Facsimile of OED entry of *colloquy*

1.

a. A talking together; a conversation, dialogue. Also, a written dialogue, as *Erasmus's Colloquies*.

1581 R. Mulcaster *Positions* xli. 241 All conferences, all both priuate, and publike colloquies.
1660 R. Blome *Fanatick Hist.* ii. 16 Frantick men that boasted of visions, and colloquies with God.
1758 J. Jortin *Life Erasmus* I. 296 The Colloquies of Erasmus..well deserve to be read.
1829 R. Southey (*title*) Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society.
1852 H. B. Stowe *Uncle Tom's Cabin* II. xxii. 65 The colloquy between Tom and Eva was interrupted by a hasty call from Miss Ophelia.
1885 A. Christison et al. *Life Sir R. Christison* I. 168 Our host in the course of our colloquy, said, etc.

b. (without *plural*) Converse, dialogue.

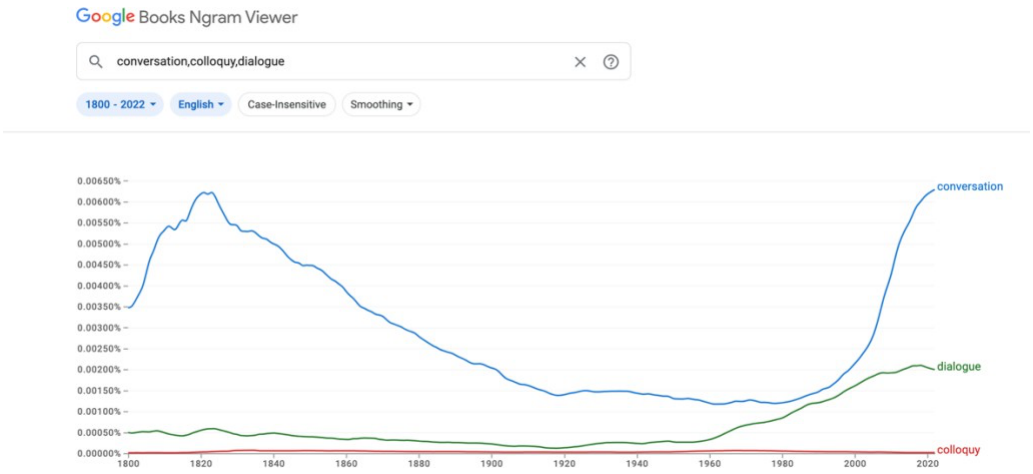
1817 Ld. Byron *Manfred* III. i. 62 Shunning..All further colloquy.
*a*1839 W. M. Praed *Poems* (1864) II. 36 When they chance to make In colloquy some small mistake.
1852 G. Grote *Hist. Greece* IX. II. lxx. 129 To invite the natives to amicable colloquy.

The word *colloquium* is also used as an alternative to the word *colloquy*, which is now restricted to its use as referring to a *conference* on a specific topic. The entry for *alloquium* in the Perseus Digital Library (Lewis & Short, 1879) includes *colloquium*. According to this entry, *alloquium* means "speaking to, addressing, an address, exhortation, encouragement, consolation, etc." and can also refer to conversation or colloquium. The entry provides examples of the usage of *alloquium* in various contexts, including in the works of Livy, Pliny, Tacitus, and Ovid (Lewis & Short, 1879).

The OED etymology complements the Ngram of *conversation* versus *colloquy* versus *dialogue*. It provides further insights into the frequency and contextual use of these terms in published texts, and elucidates the differences in how these terms manifest themselves in linguistic contexts. Ngram values add a quantitative dimension to the qualitative exploration of their etymological and conceptual distinctions.

Figure 2

Ngram of *conversation* versus *colloquy* versus *dialogue*

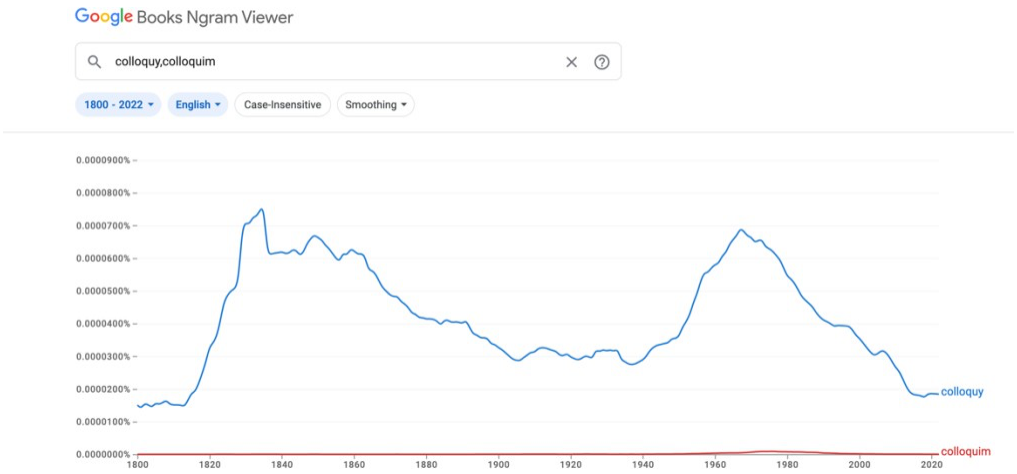


(Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer)

The Ngram analysis of the terms *conversation* versus *colloquy* versus *dialogue* indicates that *colloquy* has the lowest frequency of usage, while the term *conversation* has been used most frequently.

Figure 3

Ngram of *colloquy* versus *colloquium*



(Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer)

The frequency of the Ngram analysis comparing *colloquy* to *colloquium* shows that in the timeframe from 1800 to 2022, *colloquy* consistently exhibits a significantly higher frequency of usage compared to *colloquium*, which is barely used in published works.

I have chosen the *colloquy* as a term of art in this study to refer to the communication between an orator and audience, since it carries none of the theoretical denotations of *conversation* and *dialogue*, nor the current use of *colloquium* to denote a conference on a subject. This perspective on oratory as *colloquy* clarifies an approach to investigating how it happens. Grice (1975) proposes a theory of conversational implicatures, a theory of how participants in a conversation recover unstated meanings in them. This theory is reviewed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The question is to what extent Grice's theory can be applied to the *colloquy* between an orator and his audience, and whether it is adequate to explain it in the same way as it does for conversational exchanges. This logically leads to the question as to how a theory of the pragmatics of the colloquy in public speeches can be developed. A related issue is the fit between elements of Grice's theory and Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, in particular the elements of a speech that Aristotle identified, viz. ethos, logos and pathos, which establishes communication between a public speaker and his audience. One would expect that Aristotelian and Gricean frameworks, will capture the dynamic, dialogic nature of public address, by means of which a speaker, such as Obama, engages a diverse audience with competing expectations, values, and

experiences. These questions frame the analysis of Barack Obama's as dynamic engagements in which his language elicits cognitive and emotional responses from the audience.

Overview of the thesis

The review of literature that follows this introduction surveys prior research on Obama's speeches. These studies have focused on his rhetorical strategies and a few pragmatic dimensions of his speeches. Chapter 3 explores his journey as an orator, analysing his pivotal speeches in their historical contexts. Chapter 4 identifies the worlds defined by the presuppositions in Obama's speeches on themes like family, race, civil rights, political polarization and America's international relations. Chapter 5 analyses excerpts from Obama's speeches for his communicative intention as seen in the non-natural meaning of implicatures in them through the concepts of the Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of conversation (Haugh & Jaszczolt, 2012). The title of this chapter highlights Obama's ability to invoke a dual timeframe, addressing present challenges while envisioning future solutions on the themes he addresses in his speeches. The conclusion presents a theory of the colloquy in public oratory based on the analysis of presuppositions and implicatures in the previous two chapters. I also show that the implicatures in a speech are more appropriately called oratorical implicatures, and this change in nomenclature compels a modification in Grice's theory.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The excellence of Barack Obama's oratory has given rise to work on topics ranging from the use of rhetorical strategies and structure to pragmatic studies, some of which have been done by comparing his speeches with those of other politicians. There are also studies on key issues related to his political tenure as President.

Obama's speeches, from a rhetorical point of view, makes extensive use of Aristotle's emotional appeals of *ethos, logos* and *pathos*. *Ethos* basically represents the credibility (or character) of a speaker, *pathos* primarily builds an emotional connection with the audience and *logos* represents a logical argument that is able to satisfy the curious minds of the audience. Belnikov (2018) in his article states about Obama's DNC Convention 2004 speech that the "speech was great in terms of ethos and pathos, it even (my opinion) was amazing in appealing to the emotions of the audience." According to McCarthy & Hatcher (2002, pp.10-12), an orator ought to make use of the Aristotle's appeals to emotionally engage the audience. It is also equally important to understand how during a speech a speaker uses language to achieve desired outcomes by paying detailed attention to the audience perception in a particular context. Alvi and Baseer (2012) have also highlighted the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in Obama's speech, "Call to Renewal Keynote Address" by explaining that Obama has exhausted "almost every traditional figure of logos in this speech."

Among the many rhetorical strategies highlighted, other than the use of ethos, pathos and logos, a lot has been written about the use of metaphorical language along with other figures of speech. Igwedibia (2016) states, "In using the world to create the desired reality, the veil of discourse is suspended between our faculties of perceptions, by metaphorical extension, expands or narrows down the possible versions we may have of the real world" (p. 253).

Building a rapport with the audience can be done by different methods, like narrating stories which have been carefully picked. The relevance of the stories and the context in which the speech is delivered is important. Obama in his speeches has made extensive use of stories (Iversen & Nielsen, 2017; Berry & Gottheimer, 2010) which encompasses themes like the American Dream, identity crisis, immigration, racism, war heroes, along with narrating anecdotes from his personal life, and allusions to important events in American history.

His selection of elements to emphasise in speech, the use of strategies that would allow him to be the embodiment of the ideologies most closely related to the audience enabled President Obama to create a sense of identification with his audience that invited them to subscribe to his perspective on the issues explored in his speeches. They also highlight the storytelling skill of Barack Obama, which plays an important role in the minds of his audience and how these stories end up becoming memorable for the audience. They have described the stories behind Obama's speeches wherein they found "changes in style and consistency of message, one of unity, responsibility, and change." Thus, relevant stories, anecdotes, analogies, and use of figurative language are important elements which trigger emotional responses from the audience and thus connect their own selves with those stories narrated by the speaker.

Many researchers have picked various categories of rhetorical devices used by Obama in his speeches. Kayam and Galily (2012) have described the "Emotive Rhetorical Devices" used in Barack Obama's campaign speeches and states that Obama has used various rhetorical devices "expertly" which includes the use of "personal narrative, repetition, metaphors, clichés, questions, opposites and so on". They also add that Obama blends figurative devices, which make Obama's speech "such a rhetorical pleasure." Connell et al., (2010) have detailed the first five minutes of Obama's speech-delivery-framework and orality/ literacy in eight of his speeches. Their paper "emphasizes dialogical interaction of audience and speaker" in these speeches. Obama incorporates "dialogical interaction" in these eight speeches wherein "spontaneous additions" have also been included in few speeches, during the speech delivery as a part of the introduction. They have also laid stress on the use of "temporal organisation" of elements to connect with his audience.

Fengjie et al. (2016) have described Obama's tendency to use alliteration as a figure of speech in his speeches "to create rhythmical effect which can better attract the audience's attention and at the same time make the speaker's words more powerful and persuading" (p. 146). They have also mentioned the use of similes, metaphors and other figures of speech by Obama in order to "express his ideas in a more vivid and visual way." Berliner (2014) states that an analysis of Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign speeches highlights the use of verbal and visual tropes in his public discourse (p. 99).

Fording and Smith (2012) throw light on Obama's "rhetorical leadership" on the topic of poverty, "both in absolute terms and compared to other recent presidents." Amsden (2014) has shown that in the Tucson Address Obama has employed "a temporal network that serves as a significant impediment to rhetorical judgment." The author has highlighted Obama's concern that "the forces that divide and unite are not made to share a common temporality."

There are a few studies that have employed pragmatic theories to study Obama's speeches. Alemi et al. (2018) have applied Searle's typology theory (1978) and the use of speech acts, as well as first-person singular and plural pronouns in Obama's speech against ISIS. His findings show that President Obama uses 'assertives,' a category of speech acts, to "justify the air strikes launched by the US army on ISIS's zones in Iraq" and employs "commissives" thirty-four times in two speeches to convince civilians in the US that the war is the will of the civilians. Obama's successful use of "persuasion as a pivotal axis" has also been highlighted in the authors' findings. Thamir (2019) has also highlighted the use of Searle and Leech's theory of speech acts in President Obama's speeches. He concludes that mainly "assertives and commissive acts were used," the main functions performed by them being "collaborative and convivial" in nature. He also highlights that "promises" were used frequently by Obama during his speeches. Suwandi describes the pragma linguistics forms of "promising utterances" in five of Barack Obama's speeches and investigates "illocutionary acts of promising utterances" 'in his speeches.' The researcher found maximum use of the "constantive (sic) form (the percentage is 92%) … pervormative'(sic) form of promising utterance (the precentage (sic) is 8%)."

Altikriti (2014) in his research paper has studied persuasive speech acts using the Bach and Harnish Taxonomy. He has highlighted that President Obama in his speeches has used "more of sentences that performed constative speech acts than other speech acts where the assertive illocutionary acts are used as a persuasive factor."

Al-Ameedi and Khudhier (2015) have reviewed the political speeches of Obama, particularly the "political propaganda along with some pragmatic notions such as speech acts, the cooperative principle, politeness strategies, and

some rhetorical devices such as persuasion, metaphor, repetition, and manipulation that are relevant to the aims of the study." Their findings show that the "speech acts of statement, assertion, and advice have been used in Obama's political propaganda." In the text of the speeches, the researcher found that Grice's maxims and the politeness strategies have been obeyed for effective communication. Additionally, rhetorical devices such as persuasion, metaphor, repetition, and manipulation have been used in the text of the speeches to create political propaganda.

Igwedibia has used Grice's model (1975) of conversational implicature in which a pragmatic analysis of Obama's political speeches on "Race and Economic Renewal in America" has been done. Further, Igwedibia states that Obama's speeches have "obeyed Grice's maxims to a great extent and flouted the same to a lesser extent."

Salmon (2011) has addressed the "two instantiations of CIs: the original description of the phenomenon in Grice (1975, pp. 44–45) and a recent reincarnation of it in Potts (2005, inter alia)" (p. 3416). He has pointed out the differences between the two types and commented that "these differences are not always acknowledged," and thereafter illustrated the "problems that can arise when this occurs" (p. 3416).

In addition to the pragmatic studies reviewed above, Rahayu, et al. (2018) and Tinshe and Junaidi (2019) have compared Obama's speeches with those of other leaders and presidents. Rahayu, et al. (2018) investigated the rhetorical style in Obama and John McCain's speeches to find that their speeches had different persuasive power but their styles were different in that Obama focused on the future but McCain brought up the past (p. 115). Tinshe and Junaidi (2019) compare the word choice in the political speeches of Obama and Trump and conclude that their "ideology on immigration is related with(sic) their idea of

the immigrant's identity in American society (p.73). Wageche and Changhai Chi (2017) have drawn a comparative analysis on the use of "conceptual metaphors" in Barack Obama's and Xi Jinping's speeches. The authors have used "Lakoff and Johnson conceptual metaphor framework," to formalise an "underlying concept." As per the authors, Obama's speeches include "journey metaphors" while Xi Jinping's speeches include "nature metaphors." They also have highlighted that the leaders have used lexical units that are neutral in nature such as "distance, crossroads, pace, path, water, lions, mountains, wells, etcetera"

Steudeman (2013) has drawn a comparison between the rhetoric of Nixon and Obama (p. 59). He has expanded the rhetorical conception of Skowronek's "political time" to reveal its dimensions as a Burkean "ironic development" and also evaluated the contrast of "Barack Obama's rhetorical strategy of preemptive presidents than that of reconstructive presidents."

Raissouni (2020) has analysed the representation of the "war on terror" in the political speeches of Presidents George Bush and Barack Obama in the decade following the 9/11 attack on US. A study of the language of persuasion has been done by examining Aristotle's approach through the use of his rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Further, Lodhi et al. compared the linguistic features used in the inaugural speeches of Bush and Obama analysing their functions using Critical Discourse Analysis theory proposed by Fairclough and the theory of Persuasion postulated by Aristotle.

This review reveals that researchers have explored many aspects related to Obama as an orator, such as his rhetorical and persuasive strategies, use of storytelling in his speeches, and his start-up rhetoric. It is imperative to explore the nature of oral communication that takes place when Obama addresses his audience. I note that public speaking involves a one-to-many conversation, in which the speaker does the speaking while the response of the audience remains latent and expressed only incidentally. The overall objective of this study is to understand the dynamics of this interaction. The present study extends Grice's theory of one-to-one conversation (1975, 1989) to one-to-many conversations in public speeches as a colloquy between a speaker and her audience. For this purpose, I employ aspects of the Aristotelian specifications regarding political

speeches, contents presupposed and messages implicated in Obama's speeches. I have applied this analytic mechanism to a selection of ten speeches by Barack Hussein Obama.

Chapter 3: The oratory

The rhetorical tradition from ancient Greece survives to this day and Barack Obama stands in it. Therefore, a short account of his oratory is a requisite background to the pragmatic analysis of his speeches in the following chapters.

Barack Hussein Obama II, the 44th President of the United States of America and the first African-American President of America, is recognised as a great orator and a politician who has played a pivotal role in American political history. The speeches Obama gave, each one marking a pivotal moment in Obama's political journey, depict him as an orator par excellence after he came into the national spotlight with his Democratic National Committee (DNC) speech in 2004, just four years before his Presidential tenure, taking the entire political journalists and American citizens by surprise. The texts of Obama's Presidential speeches have been sourced from the Obama White House Archives, (*The White House*) and those speeches which are not in the White House database have been taken from the website *American Rhetoric*. These speeches cover a diverse range of themes and were delivered at significant events, such as the Democratic National Convention Keynote Address (2004), the New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech (2008), and the A More Perfect Union speech delivered in 2008 in Philadelphia addressing complexities and challenges surrounding race, within the context of American society. Obama's oratorical prowess shines through speeches like the Election Night Victory Speech (2008) and his Inaugural Address (2009), where he navigates challenges facing the nation with grace and vision. The acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize (2009) and remarks at various memorial services (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015) underscore his deep reflections on war, peace, and human rights. Through these speeches, Obama not only addresses political issues like discrimination, the economy, and international conflicts, but also delves into themes of race and ethnicity, emphasising unity and equality. His words resonate with themes of responsibility as an American citizen, urging individuals to actively engage in shaping a better future. Moreover, his discussions on police reforms highlight his commitment to encouraging accountability and fairness within law enforcement agencies.

Overview of Obama's speeches

Obama's speeches reflect his political agenda as much as it aims to inspire change within America and in international diplomacy. In analysing the impact of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) 2004 Keynote address, contrasting viewpoints have emerged, notably Frank and McPhail (2005). Frank views Obama's speech "a prophetic effort advancing the cause of racial healing" (p. 571). He interprets it as a "rhetoric of consilience," in which he is uniting a diverse audience and also emphasising common values and shared traumas (p. 572). He further argues that Obama's approach is rooted in the "essential equality" of individuals**,** promoting a mood of "audacious hope" (p. 571). He connects the historical traumas of slavery and racism with contemporary issues like economic inequality, and thus builds a sense of "commonality" among different groups. By contrast, McPhail critiques Obama's rhetoric as an **"**old vision of racelessness" that downplays the realities of racial division and trauma (pp. 572- 573). He argues that Obama's speech minimizes the "concrete realities" of racial injustice (p. 573). He contends that Obama's rhetoric caters to a desire among some section of audiences to deny America's racial history, ultimately failing to address the "trauma" experienced by many. McPhail believes that true reconciliation requires acknowledging and confronting these racial realities.

Despite their differing interpretations, both authors agree on the necessity of "racial reconciliation" and they acknowledge that their perspectives were influenced by cultural backgrounds, with Frank being a "white American and McPhail an African American" (p. 573). I now present a brief background to the speeches which are analysed in chapters 4 and 5.

The Democratic National Convention Keynote Address was delivered on July 27, 2004, at the Fleet Center in Boston. It marked a significant milestone in Obama's political trajectory. At that time, he was serving as an Illinois State Senator and was campaigning for a seat in the United States Senate. This speech not only showcased his oratorical prowess, but also served as a pivotal moment in his political journey, laying the groundwork for his future endeavours on the national stage. Cohen et al. (2012) of *The Guardian* argue that Obama's rhetoric was particularly effective in rallying his base and reinforcing his campaign's core messages and "Obama gave voters an IV drip

of inspiration." Similarly, Nyamache (2021) in his article observes that "In one keynote speech, a little known, one-term senator from Illinois was thrust into a celebrity and the Democrats saw a new leader for their party." He further adds that "the keynote speech … actually put Barack Obama in the national limelight and gave him a path towards the presidency."

The second speech analysed in the thesis is the "Yes, We Can!" or New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech, delivered on January 8, 2008, in Nashua, New Hampshire. This speech was delivered post Obama's narrow defeat to Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary of New Hampshire. Despite the setback, Obama's speech exudes hope and his unwavering commitment to his campaign's ideals and perseverance in the face of this setback. The expectations were high for Obama after his initial victory in Iowa, but this loss in New Hampshire was seen as a significant blow, yet Obama turns this moment into an opportunity to reinforce his campaign's core message. The phrase "Yes, We Can!" became a phrase of his vision for change and progress, invigorating his supporters, and establishing a strong emotional connection with the electorate. Bista (2009) discusses the linguistic power and possibility in his analysis of "Yes, We Can!" He highlights Obama's use of this phrase "as a powerful rhetorical device in his presidential campaign" (2). He further adds that "Obama presents hope and optimism" with "Yes, We Can!" and tells his audience to "look on the bright side even in the contemporary insecure times" (9).

The third speech that has been included in his study is conventionally titled a "A More Perfect Union," or also popularly known as the "race speech." It is considered as a "means intended to bring about dialogue between two historically conflicting racial groups" (Pérez Hernández, 2013, pp. 273-274). The speech was delivered on March 18, 2008, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and has been considered as "one of the most honest addresses ever given by a Commander in chief" (Smith, 2009, p. 141). This address was prompted by controversial remarks made by Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, "Obama's religious advisor and friend, whom media accused of harboring allegedly racist and anti- American sentiment" (Anderson, 2015, p. 17). Boyd (2009) discusses the deconstruction of race and identity in Barack Obama's speech on race. He adds, Obama "deconstructs and recontextualizes the

traditional concepts of race and identity as originally set forth by the US Constitution which, according to the speech, were "stained by this nation's original sin of slavery" (Boyd, 2009)."

The fourth speech selected in this study is the Election Night Victory Speech, delivered on November 4, 2008, in Grant Park, Chicago, Illinois, marks the historic moment when Barack Obama addressed the nation as the President-Elect. Maxon and Stahl describe the atmosphere during the speech, "On election night 2008, Barack Obama stood in front of an adoring crowd in Chicago's Grant Park, victorious. America has just elected its first black president, and the more than 200,000 people in attendance chanted, "Yes We Can!" like they really meant it." Wood discusses the impact of the Victory Speech by writing that "his midnight address was written in a language with roots, and stirred in his audience a correspondingly deep emotion." Glendinning reports on Obama's declaration that "change has come to America." He quotes from Obama's speech that highlighted the daunting challenges confronting not only the nation but also the global community, emphasising the collective effort needed to address them effectively. "The road ahead will be long, our climb will be steep... but I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there."

President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, delivered on January 20, 2009, in Washington DC, stands as an iconic moment in American history. The *Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* highlights the significance of Barack Obama's first inaugural address in 2009 ("Barack Obama's First Inaugural Address, 2009"). They added that "Obama delivered his inaugural address on January 20, 2009, to the largest crowd ever assembled for a presidential inauguration" and also highlighted that it "was a historic moment not only because Obama was the first African American ever sworn into executive office but also because he entered the presidency at a time of incredible adversity." Frank (2011) discusses Obama's rhetorical signature in his address as an expression of cosmopolitan civil religion (605–30).

During his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 2009, in Oslo, Norway, President Barack Obama started his speech by addressing the controversy surrounding him receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Fouché and MacAskill (2009) highlight the fact that there were "critics who said

it was too soon for him to receive such an award, given he had no accomplishments yet to justify it." They also quote Obama from the speech, "I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the considerable controversy that your generous decision has generated," he said, to laughter." Obama, as the 108th recipient of the prize "expressed humility," and said that he feels humbled to receive this prize which was previously also received by "giants of history such as Dr Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela." Obama was awarded Nobel Prize for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples (The Royal House of Norway). Obama in this speech reflected on the challenges and complexities of war. He delivered this speech on getting a Peace Prize while overseeing the wars the US was actively involved in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen at that point of time. He acknowledged in the speech that getting the Peace Prize had given birth to questions and "considerable controversy that your generous decision has generated." Bromwhich, a Professor of Literature at Yale University, describes Barack Obama's Nobel Peace prize acceptance speech as the "broadest defense he has yet offered of American military action throughout the world." While commenting on the same speech, Terrill (2011) said that Obama had very clearly "held a delicate balance" in which "he invites his audience to attend to war and peace neither as wicked nor ideal but as realistic, interdependent, and indeed comparable modes of human interaction" (p. 761). Fouché and MacAskill (2009) report on Obama's acceptance of the Nobel Prize: "President Barack Obama yesterday addressed the paradox of accepting the Nobel peace prize in Oslo while escalating the conflict in Afghanistan, invoking the concept of 'the just war' to defeat evil." Obama recognised the considerable responsibilities that come with being the Commander-in-Chief of a nation engaged in conflicts. He emphasised the need for consequences in the face of serious atrocities, highlighting the importance of upholding human rights for lasting peace. Obama's speech emphasised the necessity of addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting universal aspirations for peace and human dignity.

President Barack Obama delivered a poignant speech at a memorial service for the victims of the shooting in Tucson, Arizona. Miranda (2023) discusses how a new Tucson memorial had found a way to mourn mass-

shooting victims On January 8, 2011, Jared Lee Loughner killed 6 people and injured 13 at a "Congress on Your Corner" gathering organised by then-U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords at a Safeway supermarket. Miranda (2023) adds, "Among the dead was 9-year-old Christina-Taylor Green, who had just been elected to her school's student council. Giffords, who was shot in the head, survived." Amsden analyses the dimensions of temporality in President Obama's Tucson Memorial Address (455-76). He adds, "President Obama's speech following the January 2011 mass shooting in Tucson, Arizona employed a series of temporal shifts to help the nation integrate the tragedy into its collective consciousness." In his address, Obama expressed solidarity with the families of the fallen, the community of Tucson, and the nation as a whole. He mourned the loss of those who perished in the tragic event and honoured their lives by sharing their stories. The President highlighted the resilience and spirit of the American people, emphasising the values of democracy, peaceful assembly, and free speech that were tragically disrupted by the violent incident. Obama paid tribute to the victims and also shared moments of hope and gratitude, acknowledged the survivors of the shooting, including Representative Gabrielle Giffords, and praised the heroic actions of various individuals.

President Barack Obama's speech on March 7, 2015 at the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches, also known as the Selma Speech, commemorated the historic events that unfolded in Selma, Alabama. Obama marched arm-in-arm with Congressman John Lewis, one of the organisers of the march and who himself had endured a beating 50 years ago. That march across Edmund Pettus Bridge was held to campaign for voting rights for all African Americans. President Obama in his address refers to the crowning achievement of the march and the work still remaining in these words "What they did here…[they] conquer[ed] hate." Obama reflected on the courage and sacrifice of the civil rights activists who marched for voting rights, enduring violence and oppression. The President emphasized the patriotism and faith of those who participated in the marches, highlighting their role in advancing the ideals of equality and justice in America. Obama projected the legacy of Selma as a beacon of inspiration for future generations, calling for continued activism to uphold the principles of democracy and equality.

President Barack Obama delivered a moving eulogy on 26 June 2015 for

the Honourable Reverend Clementa Pinckney, who tragically lost his life in the Charleston church shooting. Rhodan (2015) reports that "Obama delivered a stirring eulogy and meditation on the nature of grace at the funeral of Rev. Clementa Pinckney" (26 June 2015). Bostdorff and Goldzwig (2020) analyse Barack Obama's eulogy, highlighting how grace serves as a vehicle for collective salvation and Obama's role in advancing civil rights (pp.107-52). During the eulogy, Obama reflected on Pinckney's life, character, and the impact he had on those around him. "Eulogizing Pinckney as a man of faith and grace, Obama affirmed the black church's dual focus on religious faith and collective civil rights action as exemplary of American civil religion and treated Dylann Roof's [the assassin] heinous act as both emanating from the sin of slavery and embodying prevenient grace that had led the nation to acceptance of justifying grace and the need for sanctifying action as he discussed the Confederate flag, systemic racism, and gun violence" (Bostdorff and Goldzwig, 2020, p. 107). The eulogy also touched on themes of grace, forgiveness, and the need for national introspection on issues of race and violence. The eulogy culminated in a poignant moment when President Obama led the crowd in singing "Amazing Grace."

President Barack Obama's remarks at the Democratic National Convention in July 27, 2016 were significant for several reasons. This speech was unique in that it showcased a sitting president with high approval ratings actively endorsing his party's nominee, breaking from historical patterns where outgoing presidents were less involved in their successor's campaigns. Obama's address echoed themes of hope, optimism, and American exceptionalism, reminiscent of his 2008 election campaign. Obama's popularity and the alignment between him and Clinton were notable, setting the stage for a highly engaged role for Obama in the campaign.

The speeches referred to above contain Obama's views on a set of topics that is the staple of political speeches, the ones that Aristotle refers to as "deliberative rhetoric." It is indeed remarkable that these topics fall within the confines of the five topics that Aristotle identified as being appropriate for such speeches— "finances, war and peace, national defense, imports and exports, and the framing of laws" (Aristotle, 1991, *On Rhetoric*, 1.4, 1395b).

In this study, I have identified the broad topics that Obama touches upon

using the division as given on the website of the Pew Research Center (PRC) (pewresearch.org). The manner in which these topics are presented does not appear to be based on a strict classificatory system, since the topics overlap across different categories. Obama as a candidate and as President spoke on topics that align with the topics listed on the PRC's website. A brief roundup of some of the topics and their place in Obama's speeches is given below.

About Family and Relationships

Barack Obama's speeches often delved into the theme of family and relationships, touching on household structures and family roles. He also emphasised their crucial role in shaping individuals and society. In his speeches, Obama underscored parents' responsibility to provide guidance, love, and stability to their children, since they have the most significant impact on a child's development. His utterances reveal that he valued healthy relationships founded on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. Additionally, Obama saw the value of building supportive communities where individuals could rely on one another for assistance. Here are examples from the speeches analysed in this thesis illustrating the theme of family and relationships.

In his DNC 2004 speech, Obama emphasised the role of family and relationships in his life. He spoke of his diverse heritage and his upbringing by a single mother and his grandparents, emphasising the values they instilled in him. He said, "I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible." On the night of his election Victory Speech in 2008, Obama acknowledged the sacrifices and support of his own family, saying, "I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of our family, the love of my life, the nation's next first lady, Michelle Obama." In the Remarks by the President at a Memorial Service in 2011 for the Victims of the Shooting in Tucson in Arizona, Obama addressed the importance of community and supportive relationships in times of tragedy. He said, "We may not be able to stop all evil in the world, but I know that how we treat one another, that's entirely up to us." Finally, in the Democratic National Convention, 2016 speech, Obama reflected on his time in office and the support of his family, acknowledged his family's support in his life and presidency. He stated,

"Michelle has made me a better president, and a better man."

This idealistic view of family filters out some of the difficult realities about his father. Barack Obama Sr. abandoned Ann Dunham, his mother, in Hawaii when he went to study at Harvard. For him, "Ambition always came before anything else, particularly women and children" (Remnick, 2010, p. 55). His mother got a divorce from him in 1964, when he was only 2 years old. His father "signed the papers without protest" (Remnick, p. 57). Of his father, Obama would say, "At the time of his death, my father remained a myth to me, both more and less than a man" (Obama, 2004, p. 5). In spite of this family history, Obama had great affection for his father.

In all other ways, Obama's references in his speeches to his family are authentic, as is evident from Remnick's (2010) portrayal of his family.

> "Barack Obama's family broadly defined is vast. Its multi-confessional multiracial multilingual and multicontinental. … The Obama family tree is as vast an intricate has one of those ancient banyan trees near the beach at Waikiki. As a politician Obama would make use of that family asking voters to imagine it and him as a metaphor for American diversity" (p. 59).

Recalling the night of the DNC 2004 keynote address, when his name was announced before he took the stage, he wrote, "I thought about my mother and father and grandfather and what it might have like for them to be in the audience. I thought about my grandmother in Hawaii, watching the convention on TV because her back was too deteriorated for her to travel" (Obama, 2006).

About Politics and Policy

Obama's speeches touched upon various aspects of politics and policy, addressing topics such as civil rights, political parties and polarization, inequality, internal conflict and, gun violence and international violence. Obama's rhetorical strategy in all these speeches is to invoke a dual timeframe on these issues, to speak about them as it was in the past or the present and the way they ought to be or can be in the future.

In the Tucson Memorial speech, Obama recounts the harrowing incident that led to 6 people being killed, including a 9-year-old girl, of the 18 people who were shot at a supermarket in Tucson. In his Tucson Memorial Service Speech (Obama, 2011), he recalls what happens after such incidents, which is

"the usual plane of politics and point-scoring and pettiness that drifts away in the next news cycle." He immediately suggests that it need not be this way. He offers a vision in which everyone strives "to be better in our private lives, to be better friends and neighbors and coworkers and parents." He goes on to say, "…only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to the challenges of our nation."

In his addresses throughout his presidency, he navigated complex topics, offering a vision for the future while urging responsibility and unity among American citizens. Obama speaks about people's faith in America as being a safe country and providing opportunities to everybody. In his Inaugural Address in 2009, Obama emphasised the importance of unity and resilience during challenges. He speaks about the threats of terrorism and the need for a strong, secure nation, stating, "Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age." In his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech in 2009, Obama addresses the complexities of maintaining global peace and America's role in international security. He acknowledges the necessity of diplomacy but also recognises that, at times, use of force is unavoidable to protect its citizens, reflecting on America's responsibility to maintain global stability: "But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people." Obama delves into the need for continued vigilance and action in the pursuit of justice and equality. During the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery Marches in 2015, he emphasised the ongoing relevance of the civil rights movement, stating, "The march is not yet over, the race is not yet won, and that we must keep marching towards a more just society for all." This call to action highlights the need for policy-making that addresses systemic inequalities. Similarly, in his eulogy for Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Obama confronted racial tensions and the need for healing in the face of adversity. He honours the victims of racial violence, saying, "We are here to honour Reverend Pinckney, and we are here to honour those nine others who were taken from us," a poignant reminder of the deep racial wounds still present in America and the ongoing necessity for

policy reforms aimed at addressing these issues. The theme of politics and policy in Obama's speeches is significant not only because it reflects his administration's priorities but also because it underscores the broader challenges and responsibilities that come with leadership. By addressing these issues directly, Obama acknowledges the complexities and challenges associated with governance, often linking historical struggles to contemporary issues. His speeches consistently emphasised the need for continuing effort, unity, and vigilance in the pursuit of justice, security, and equality, offering a comprehensive vision of what it means to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.

About Race and Ethnicity

Obama's speeches addressed the issue of race on several occasions, most notably in A More Perfect Union speech delivered on March 18, 2008 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The speech became an imperative for Obama because the news network ABC had broadcast a compilation of Jeremiah Wright's sermons on March 13, 2008, including one preached on April 13, 2003, titled "Confusing God and Government" (Remnick, 2010, pp. 517-18). The excerpt that caused the most consternation and posed the gravest danger to Obama's candidacy was this excerpt.

> "When it came to treating her citizens of African descent fairly, America failed. She put them in chains. The government put them in slave quarters, put them on auction blocks, put them in cotton fields, put them in inferior schools, put them in substandard housing, put them in scientific experiments, put them in the lowest paying jobs, put them outside the equal protection of the law, kept them out of their racist bastions of higher education and locked them into positions of hopelessness and helplessness. The government gives [young black men] drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God bless America.' No, no, no! Not God Bless America. God *damn* America—that's in the Bible—for killing innocent people. God *damn* America for treating her citizens as less than human" (Remnick, pp. 518-19).

The threat to Obama's campaign came from his long association with Wright

who was the pastor of Trinity Church, of which Obama was a member. It was against this background that Obama delivered A More Perfect Union speech. Obama addressed the issue of race by narrating his own biography.

> "I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas…I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slave owners—an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue" (Obama, 2008).

With these words, he signals that he possesses the authority to speak about race in America. Obama does not denounce Wright. Remnick (2010) observes, "Wright sees a static condition of outrageous oppression, while Obama sees one of progress and promise (p. 523). Remnick notes further, "Finally, the speech was about the 'unfinished' character of the American experiment and the need for unity—racial, religious, and generational—to fight injustice and move forward" (p. 524.)

About Civil Rights Movement

Obama's racial identity came from his mother, according to Harvard Law School Professor Charles J. Ogletree Jr. in a "Understanding Obama," three-part lecture series (Schorow, 2011). His introduction to the civil rights movement began with the books his mother got him. Ogletree mentions that at a rally in 1990, Obama introduced Harvard Law Professor Derrick Bell, who was taking unpaid leave, to promote diversity. After he graduated in 1991, Obama told Ogletree that he wanted to become a community organiser in Chicago, which he did in South Side neighbourhood of the city.

Obama has frequently cited the influences on his life and the direction it took. He writes, "Most of all I was inspired by the young leaders of the civil rights movement—not just Dr. King but John Lewis and Bob Moses, Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash (Obama, 2020, p.11)." He was also deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha* (holding fast to truth) and the power of non-violent struggle. Obama writes with the greatest admiration about Gandhi.

> "Gandhi's actions had stirred me even more than his words; he'd

> his beliefs to the test by risking his life, going to prison and throwing himself fully into the struggles of his people. His nonviolent campaign for Indian independence from Britain, which began in 1915 and continued for more than thirty years, hadn't just helped overcome an empire and liberate much of the subcontinent, he had set off a moral charge that pushed around the globe. It became a beacon for other dispossessed marginalised groups— Black Americans in the Jim Crow South—intent on securing their freedom" (Obama, 2020, p. 599).

Obama had not been long in his work in South Side that he arrived at the conclusion "that the energy of the civil rights movement had migrated—into electoral politics (Obama p. 18)." And join electoral politics, first winning a seat in the Illinois Senate in 1996, and a US Senate seat in 2004.

One of the most significant approbation Obama received about his role in the civil rights movement came, as he was campaigning in the Democratic Primary in 2007 came from Dr Otis Moss Jr. He told him, "You, Barack, are part of the Joshua generation. You and others like you are responsible for the next leg of the journey... But ultimately it will be up to you, with God's help, to build on what we have done, and lead our people and this country out of the wilderness" (Obama, 2020, p. 122). That year, Obama attended the commemoration of the Selma March, an event organized every year by Senator John Lewis. When it was his turn to speak, Obama spoke "about the legacy of the Moses generation and how it had made my life possible, about the responsibility of the Joshua generation to take the next steps required for justice in this nation and around the world, not just for Black people but for all those who had been dispossessed…" (Obama, p. 124).

Not only was Obama wholly invested in the civil rights movement, he was to give voice to it by adopting "the language, cadence, imagery, and memories of the civil rights movement and graft it onto his campaign giving it the sense of something larger, a movement" (Remnick, 2010, p. 493). A notable example of this voice is the speech he gave on January 3, 2008 after he had won the Iowa caucuses. He began the exordium saying

> "You know, they said this day would never come. They said our sights was set to high. They said this country was too divided, too

> disillusioned to ever come together around a common purpose. But on this January night, at this defining moment in history, you have done what the cynics said we couldn't do...We are one people. And our time for change has come!" (Obama, 2007, Iowa Victory speech).

Obama goes on to say, "This was the moment when we tore down barriers that have divided us for too long. When we rallied people of all parties and ages" (Obama, 2007, Iowa Victory speech). In the peroration, Obama says,

> "Hope is what led a band of colonists to rise up against an empire; what led the greatest of generations to free a continent and heal a nation; what led young women and young men to sit at lunch counters and brave fire hoses and March through Selma and Montgomery for freedom's cause. Hope—hope is what let me here today" (Obama, 2007, Iowa Victory speech).

Remnick (2020) notes that in this speech, "the civil-rights struggle was recast in terms not of national guilt but of national progress. The black freedom struggle became, in Obama's terms, an *American* freedom struggle" (p. 494).

Remnick perceives a similar rhetoric in the "the story and cadences of the civil-rights movement" in Obama's speech at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. In the peroration, after recounting the story of Ashley Baia and the elderly black man in Horry County who said that he had been won over by her, Obama continues,

> "By itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and old black man is not enough to change a country. By itself, it is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children. But it is where we begin. It is why I believe that the walls in that room began to crack and shake at that moment.
>
> And if they can shake in that room, then they can shake in Atlanta. And if they can shake in Atlanta, they can shake in the state of Georgia. And if they can shake in the state of Georgia, they can shake all across America. And if enough of our voices join together, if we see each other in other's eyes, we can bring those walls tumbling down. The walls of Jericho can finally

come tumbling down" (p. 505).

Kenneth Mack, a historian at Harvard Law School said of Obama that he was "the first president who has been able to wrap the history of the civil rights movement into the fabric of American history" Schuessler (2017).

About Political Parties and Polarization

About the time that the campaign for the 2008 US elections was beginning to take shape, Galston and Nivola (2006) identified three facets of polarization in American politics that scholars and commentators agreed about. First, the country was more polarized than at any time in the past. Second, the ideological divide between political parties had widened over the past few decades, and third, "with declining regulation of the media, mass media outlets have become more numerous, diverse and politicized." They observed that these three happenings were "mutually reinforcing." Berman (2016) argues that divisions in America exist "over economic policy, social policy, foreign policy, race, privacy and national security, and many other things." (At the end of his two-term presidency, Obama (2020) lamented the crisis engulfing America,

> "rooted in a fundamental contest between two opposing visions of what America is and what it should be; a crisis that has left the body politic divided, angry, and mistrustful, and has allowed for an on-going breach of institutional norms, procedural safeguards, and the adherence to basic facts that both Republican and Democrats once took for granted" (p. xv).

Obama traces the origins of this polarization to President Lyndon Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, becoming more acute over the years with what were perceived to be contentious political, cultural and legal events and postures (Obama, p. 242).

A Pew Research Center Report (2014) found that

> "Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades. These trends manifest themselves in myriad ways, both in politics and in everyday life. And a new survey of 10,000 adults nationwide finds that these divisions are greatest among those who are the most engaged and active in the political process."

An earlier Pew Research Center Report (2012) found that much of the increase in polarization in the political values and beliefs that it had been tracking from 1987 occurred during the Bush and Obama years.

Obama's (2004) keynote address at the DNC was a strong denunciation of the polarization that plagued America. He shares the diversity of his family, and follows it up affirming "that we're all connected as one people," "one American family." Then comes the lofty proclamation that "there is not a liberal America and a conservative America -- there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America -- there's the United States of America."

In the speech "A More Perfect Union" delivered in Philadelphia on March 18, 2008, Obama confronted the deepening polarization in American politics along racial and ideological lines. He said, "This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation-- the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election."

The irony of it is that political science research found "the Obama administration was marked by polarization at record highs. Using DW-NOMINATE (political scientists' workhorse measure of congressional ideology), the first congress of the Obama years (111th) was "the most polarized ever," and the 112th, 113th, and 114th each followed suit" (Reynolds, 2016).

About Inequality

Obama in his speeches mentions the high levels of inequality in the country, a fact backed by statistics. Jackson & Holzman (2020) found that "trends in collegiate inequalities moved in lockstep with the trend in income inequality over the past century." When income inequality grew, college enrolment and college inequality also grew. They conclude that income inequality altered "the distribution of life chances." The World Economic Forum found that reduction in income disparity stalled in the decade from late 1980 through 1990s, and progress since then is lower that what it was in the 1970s. Citing figures from U.S. Census Bureau about income disparity between white and black households in 2008, Schaeffer (2020) found that

black household income was 63% of the median income of white households. Obama points out that racial inequalities are artificial, since it has been foisted on the nation when he says, “There’s not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there’s the United States of America.” Four years later, he was to give a rousing cry to ameliorate this situation saying, “Yes, we can, to justice and equality. Yes, we can -- to opportunity and prosperity. Yes, we can heal this nation.”

In A More Perfect Union speech, he reiterates the goal of achieving racial justice: “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union... we can perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes.” If ever a confirmation is needed that racial justice is attainable, it can be found in his Election Night Victory Speech 2008. He speaks with conviction when he says, “If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible... tonight is your answer.” It becomes an occasion for celebration on his inauguration as the 44th President of the United States. He declares, “This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed... why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration.” At his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance speech, he recalls the non-violent struggles of Gandhi and King as they led their people towards freedom and justice, because of “their fundamental faith in human progress.” Obama comes full circle at another DNC in 2016 to where he started in 2004 when he challenged the audience saying, “We all have to stand up for each other, recognize that we are stronger together.”

About Gun Violence

Obama’s 8-year tenure as President was marked by 38 incidents of killings, according to the data available in the Mother Jones Mass Shooting Database, which has been tracking gun violence from 1982 to the present (Follman et al., 2024). Any incident in which there are 3 or more fatalities is entered as a mass shooting incident in the database. The highest number of fatalities during Obama’s presidency occurred at the Pulse night club in Orlando, Florida on June 16, 2016 in which 49 people lost their lives and 53 were injured. While Obama spoke after each of these incidents, he gave memorial speeches at 3 of them—after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in New Town, Connecticut, at which 20 children and 6 adults lost

their lives; after the Tucson killing, at which 6 people were killed and 13 injured; and after the Charleston Church shooting, at which 9 people were killed and 1 person was injured. After the Umpqua Community College shooting, he lamented, "Somehow, this [mass killings] has become routine. The reporting has become routine. My response here, from this podium, has become routine" (Korte, 2015). A few years earlier, after the Sandy Hook massacre, Obama admitted to the need "to take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2012). However, the duty to comfort a nation in mourning was one Obama had to take upon himself time and time again. Following the tragic shooting in Tucson, Arizona, on January 12, 2011, Obama addressed the nation, emphasizing the impact of gun violence and calling for a reflection on the state of public discourse. He said, "But at a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized--at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who happen to think differently than we do--it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we're talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds."

In his eulogy for Reverend Clementa Pinckney following the Charleston church shooting on June 26, 2015, Obama addressed the persistent issue of gun violence in America. He spoke about the need for change and the importance of addressing the underlying causes of such violence. He stated, "We do not earn grace. We are all sinners. We don't deserve it. But God gives it to us anyway. And we choose how to receive it. It's our decision how to honor it." This reflection on grace was intertwined with a broader call for addressing the systemic issues contributing to gun violence and ensuring that tragedies like the Charleston shooting are met with a commitment to meaningful reform.

Through these speeches, Obama consistently advocated for a national response to gun violence that involves both reflection and action. He emphasised the need for stricter gun control measures and a more thoughtful consideration of the violence that permeates American society, urging for changes that would prevent future tragedies and foster a more compassionate and safe community.

About War and International Conflict

Obama's speeches often addressed the difficult choices involved in war and international conflict, candidly discussing the need for both diplomacy and military action while highlighting the moral and ethical challenges that accompany leadership in times of crisis. In his Inaugural Address on January 20, 2009, Obama addressed the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, calling for a new approach to international relations and the end of these wars. He emphasised the importance of responsibly transitioning control of these countries to their citizens. He stated, "We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan."

This was not to be. Six months into his first term, Iraq and Afghanistan were to prove intractable. Casualties during this period were more "than his five predecessors at the outset of their terms" (Antholis, 2009). What is more, by 2014 Obama had to engage in four other conflicts, the Islamic State or ISIS, the Civil Wars in Syria, the war in Yemen and the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Cordesman, 2014).

In this way Obama's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech delivered in Oslo, Norway, on December 10, 2009 proved prescient. In the Acceptance speech, Obama discussed the moral complexities of war, emphasizing the difficult decisions that leaders had to make to protect their national interests and citizens. He acknowledged that while eradicating violent conflict entirely may be unattainable, there are times when the use of force can be both necessary and morally justified. He stated, "We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth: We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations--acting individually or in concert--will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified." He also acknowledged the paradox of being a wartime leader while receiving the Peace Prize. He discussed the moral dilemmas of war and the necessity of using force in certain situations to maintain peace and security, stating, "I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies." He also viewed America's involvement in wars as a defence of civil rights and freedom against authoritarianism. In his Selma Speech on March 7, 2015, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery

marches, Obama connected the civil rights movement to international struggles for freedom and justice. He highlighted how America's fight for civil rights inspired global movements and stressed the need for the nation to continue standing up for the oppressed worldwide, stating, "It is important to remember that our world is interconnected. The march in Selma wasn't just about civil rights in America, it was about human rights everywhere."

His remarks at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama emphasized America's role in promoting human rights globally. He remarked, "We are a nation that has gone to war and still seeks peace. We are a nation that values human rights and understands the complexities of international relations."

Through these speeches, Obama navigated the complex landscape of war and international conflict, emphasising the need for a balanced approach that includes both military and diplomatic efforts. His candid discussions about the moral and ethical dimensions of conflict reflect his broader vision for responsible and principled leadership in global affairs and the challenges associated with it to protect national interests while striving for peace and stability. Obama's speeches often dealt with the difficult choices involved in matters of war and international conflict.

He acknowledged the harsh realities of global security, including terrorism, civil unrest, and ideological extremism, while simultaneously calling for restraint, multilateral cooperation, and a long-term commitment to peacebuilding. In his addresses, he did not shy away from confronting the paradoxes of leadership—recognising the need for force in some instances, while affirming the importance of diplomacy, international law, and shared humanity as essential tools of global governance. His articulation of "just war" principles, particularly in the Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech, exemplified his effort to reconcile the role of a Commander-in-Chief with the aspirations of a global peacemaker.

This review of topics does not include all the topics that are frequently mentioned in Obama's speeches. The themes mentioned above, however, reflect a cross-section of the most salient and recurrent concerns across his public addresses, as represented in the ten speeches chosen for this study. The manner in which he has developed the topics in this chapter are instances of his rhetorical

strategies and suggestive of the rich background that he weaves into his speeches, an analysis of which is presented in the next two chapters. These themes, whether related to personal identity, national unity, or international responsibility, are never addressed in isolation. Instead, Obama interlaces them with historical references, moral reasoning, and personal narrative to create a layered and multidimensional discourse.

The speeches analysed in this chapter are not simply political statements or ceremonial utterances; they are carefully constructed acts of rhetorical engagement. Each speech offers a unique configuration of context, audience, and purpose, yet all are unified by Obama's consistent use of oratorical tools that appeal to reason, emotion, and ethical responsibility. His ability to transform political discourse into a space of shared reflection and civic imagination positions his oratory as persuasive speech.

This chapter, therefore, sets the stage for the pragmatic exploration that follows. The topics and strategies outlined here provide the necessary context for examining the underlying mechanics of presupposition and implicature in Obama's speeches. The next two chapters draw on this foundation to explore how Obama, through his linguistic choices, constructs a colloquy with his audience—one that transcends mere transmission of information and instead engages listeners cognitively and emotionally. In doing so, his public oratory exemplifies the dynamic interplay between speaker intention, audience interpretation, and the unspoken assumptions that bind them together in a shared communicative space.

Chapter 4: The worlds in Obama's speeches

In this chapter, the concept of presuppositions has been explored, which is fundamental to understand how language conveys meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. I begin with a brief review of presuppositions, tracing its history from the early works of philosophers like Frege and Russell to contemporary theories. The discussion will highlight the role of presuppositions in linguistic competence and how they relate to elements of language and context. The final section of the chapter will apply the theoretical insights gained from the previous discussions to an analysis of presuppositions in the speeches of Barack Obama. By identifying presupposition triggers and interpreting them within the socio-cultural and political contexts of his addresses, I will explore how Obama uses presuppositions to initiate a colloquy with his audience. The analysis will focus on recurring themes in his speeches, such as family and relationships, inequality and will also extend to his discussions on the civil rights movement, politics and policy, US Elections, religion, gun violence and international affairs.

4.1 A brief review of presuppositions

The understanding of presupposition (PSP) has evolved through the works of various philosophers and linguists since Gottlob Frege identified it in 1892, in *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* (On Sense and Reference) within the context of discovering how referring expressions in natural language could be translated into logical language (Levinson, 1983, p.169). From that point in time, the development of the concept has made the tacit assumption about linguistic competence, the assumption that PSPs are inferable only because they are chiefly based on elements in language and linguistic structure. This fact undergirds the present study.

Frege's theory revolves around propositions, asserting that referring phrases and temporal clauses inherently presuppose their referents (Levinson, 1983, p. 221). For instance, in sentences (4.1) and (4.2):

(4.1) Kepler died in misery.

(4.2) After the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarrelled (Levinson, p. 229).

In (4.1) the existence of Kepler is presupposed, while in (4.2) it is presupposed that Schleswig-Holstein separated from Denmark, besides the

existence of the politico-geographical entities mentioned in it.

Further, Frege made a distinction between reference (*bedeutung*) and sense (*sinn*). In *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* he gave the following famous examples to distinguish between sense and reference (p. 215).

(4.3) the morning star = the morning star

(4.4) the morning star = the evening star

Frege argued that the expressions on both sides of (4.3) and (4.4) have the same meaning in one sense, but different meanings in another: that is, they have the same reference (*bedeutung*), that is, Venus, but not the same sense (*sinn*) (p. 219).

Russell, however, strongly disagreed with Frege's conception of sense and reference leading to the development of the theory of descriptions (Levinson, 1983, p. 170). He constantly struggled with the question of why certain sentences in which proper referents were missing could be meaningful, as mentioned below.

(4.5) The present king of France is wise. (Levinson, 1983, p. 170)

Russell argued in 1905 that sentences like "The present king of France is wise" were problematic in Frege's framework (Levinson, p. 170). He proposed a logical analysis where sentences involving definite descriptions encapsulated the existence of a person fitting the description. In the case of sentences like (4.5) of the form "The x is P," where P is some property of x, Russell argued that its logical form ought to encapsulate the fact that x has some feature F, that is, "there is a person x, who has the feature of being king of France;" that there is no other person that shares the feature F, that is, "there is no other person y, who has the feature of being king of France," and that this x is P, which in (4.5) translates to that "x is wise." Russell analysed indefinite descriptions in the same way. Starting with the assertion that indefinite descriptions uniquely specify individuals, he analysed (4.6) as in (4.7).

(4.6) Some dog is annoying.

(4.7) There is an x such that:

1. x is a dog; and
2. x is annoying.

This analysis, according to Russell, resolved the problem relating to indefinite descriptions, where "some dog" in (4.6) is not a referring expression and it need not refer to a mysterious, non-existent entity.

Strawson, on the other hand, challenged Russell's approach. He argued that sentences like "The King of France is wise" presuppose the existence of a king of France, aligning more closely with Frege's views. Strawson proposed that sentences presuppose certain conditions of truth or falsity, suggesting a deeper connection between language and reality. He claimed that there existed a special kind of relationship that serves as a precondition for (4.8) and (4.9) to be true or false.

(4.8) The King of France is wise.

(4.9) There is a present King of France.

Strawson observed that uttering (4.8) presupposes (4.9). Levinson defined this Strawsonian view as in (4.10).

(4.10) A statement A presupposes another statement B iff:

a. if A is true, then B is true.

b. if A is false, then B is true. (ibid 175)

Or, equivalently,

> "One sentence presupposes another iff whenever the first is true or false, the second is true (Beaver et al. (2021). Strawson also stated that Russell could not clearly explain presupposition in negative sentences. Thus, it is clear that Strawson was more in alignment with Frege in relation to the theory of definite descriptions" (Levinson, 1983, p. 173).

The elucidation of presupposition from Frege and Russell to Strawson has revolved around the reference of proper names and definite descriptions: "Kepler," "the separation of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark" (4.1) & (4.2); "the present king of France" (4.5); and "the king of France" (4.8).

Donnellan (1966) added another layer to the discussion by introducing the context-dependence of assertions. He identified two uses of definite descriptions: attributive and referential. Donnellan illustrated this distinction with the example "Smith's murderer is insane," showcasing how the use of the definite description changes based on the context of knowledge about Smith's murderer. This contextual understanding brought a new dimension to the study of presuppositions and reference in language.

Donnellan's view that context is a significant input to semantic inference was formalized in 1989 by Robert Stalnaker when he introduced the concept of *common ground.* Stalnaker (2002) defined common ground "To presuppose

something is to take it for granted, or at least to act as if one takes it for granted, as background information – as common ground among the participants in the conversation (p. 701). Prior to Stalnaker, this concept was variously referred to as "common knowledge" (Lewis, 1969), "mutual knowledge or, belief" (Schiffer, 1972), and "joint knowledge" (McCarthy, 1990). Stalnaker (2002) formalizes *common ground* model as follows:

> "It is common ground that φ in a group if all members accept (for the purpose of the conversation) that φ, and all believe that all accept that φ, and all believe that all believe that all accept that φ, etc." (p. 716).

Stalnaker (2002) additionally highlights the manner in which hearers perceive a speaker's common ground.

> "Common belief is the model for common ground, but discussions of speaker presupposition have emphasized from the start a number of ways in which what is presupposed may diverge from what is mutually known or believed. One may make assumptions, and what is assumed may become part of the common ground, temporarily. One may presume that things are mutually believed without being sure that they are. That something is common belief may be a pretense – even a mutually recognized pretense" (p. 704).

Stalnaker's common ground model posits that certain information becomes common ground in a group if all members accept it for the purpose of the conversation, and they believe that everyone else accepts it as well (Stalnaker, 2002, p.716). Common belief serves as a model for common ground, but it is acknowledged that what is presupposed might diverge from what is mutually known or believed (Stalnaker, p. 704). The notion of common ground and its connection to presupposition shed light on how presuppositions are influenced by the context and shared knowledge in a conversation, that is common ground explains how PSPs are perceived, which refer to elements in common ground. Without common ground, PSPs are not possible. Access to common ground is facilitated by linguistic elements such as definite descriptions, factive verbs, implicative verbs, change of state verbs, iteratives, and verbs of judging. (Levinson, 1983, pp. 181-185; Potts, 2014, pp. 5-6). These elements are known as presupposition triggers.

Levinson reproduces a list of these triggers, compiled by Karttunen. One such trigger involves definite descriptions, as explored by Strawson (1950, 1952). For instance, in the context of the following example:

(4.11) Mary *saw*/didn't *see* the cat in the garden.

There exists a cat in the garden.

Another category of triggers is factive verbs, as described by Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1971). These verbs presuppose the truth of their complement clauses. For instance, in

(4.12) Neha *regrets*/doesn't *regret* eating the last biscuit

the presupposition is that Neha ate the last biscuit. Other factive verbs include *know*, *be sorry that*, *be proud that*, *be indifferent that*, *be glad that*, and *be sad that*.

Implicative verbs, as discussed by Karttunen (1971b), are another type of presupposition trigger. These verbs presuppose the truth of their complement clauses, but the presupposition is negated in the negative form. For example, in

(4.13) Tom *managed*/didn't *manage* to fix the table

the presupposition is that Tom tried to fix the table.

Change of state verbs, as studied by Sellars (1954) and Karttunen (1973), presuppose the prior state of affairs. In the sentence

(4.14) Ted *stopped*/didn't *stop* playing cricket

the presupposition is that Ted had been playing cricket.

Iteratives, such as *continue* in

(4.15) Amit *continued*/didn't *continue* to rule the game.

presuppose the prior state of affairs, in this case that Amit had been ruling the game.

Verbs of judging, as described by Fillmore (1971a), presuppose the prior state of affairs. For instance, in

(4.16) The gardener *came*/didn't *come* again

the presupposition is that the gardener came before.

Temporal clauses, as discussed by Frege (1892/1952) and Heinämäki (1972), presuppose the truth of their subordinate clauses. In the sentence

(4.17) Mary *accused*/didn't *accuse* Edward of *bribing*

the presupposition is that bribing is bad.

Cleft sentences, as studied by Halvorsen (1978), Prince (1978a), and Atlas and Levinson (1981), presuppose the existence of the focused element. For example, in

(4.18) What Tina *lost*/didn't *lose* was her necklace

the presupposition is that Tina lost something.

Implicit clefts with stressed constituents, as described by Chomsky (1972) and Wilson and Sperber (1979), presuppose the existence of the focused element. In the sentence

(4.19) Bulb *was/wasn't* invented by Edison

the presupposition is that someone invented the bulb.

Comparisons and contrasts, as discussed by Lakoff (1971), presuppose the truth of their comparative clauses. For instance, in

(4.20) Julie *called Simon a misogynist*, and then *he insulted her*

the presupposition is that for Julie to call Simon a misogynist would be to insult him.

Non-restrictive relative clauses presuppose the truth of their subordinate clauses. In the sentence

(4.21) The earliest Harrappans, *of the third millennium B.C.*, were/were not town builders.

the presupposition is that the earliest Harrappans in the third millennium B.C. were/were not town builders. Counterfactual conditionals, as studied by Karttunen (1971a), presuppose the falsity of their antecedents. For example, in

(4.22) If Alexander only had twelve more horses, the Romance languages would/would not exist today.

the presupposition is that Alexander didn't have twelve more horses.

Finally, questions, as described by Katz (1972) and Lyons (1977a), presuppose the truth of their presuppositions. In the question

(4.23) Is there a Nobel laureate at the Indian Institute of Science?

the presupposition is that either there is a Nobel laureate at the Indian Institute of Science or there isn't.

4.2 Properties of Presupposition

4.2.1 Defeasibility

PSPs are defeasible, in the sense that they can be overridden or cancelled out in certain discourse contexts or intra-sentential contexts. In simpler terms, presuppositions can be challenged or negated without causing any contradiction or anomaly.

Presuppositions, according to Levinson (1983), are highly dependent on the context in which they are used. They have a tendency to disappear in certain situations, whether it's the immediate linguistic context, the broader discourse context, or in circumstances where conflicting assumptions are made. By examining the factive verb "know" in examples (4.24), (4.25), and (4.26) below, I observe that when the subject is in the second or third person, it is possible to automatically assume the truth of the complement, as stated in (4.24). However, when the subject is in the first person, as shown in (4.25), and the verb is negated, the presupposition clearly fails. In this case, (4.25) does not presuppose (4.26). The presupposition that the speaker knows (4.26), which is precisely what the sentence denies, is overridden by such denials, as explained by Gazdar (1979a: 142fl) quoted in Levinson (1983).

(4.24) John doesn't know that Bill came.

(4.25) I don't know that Bill came.

(4.26) Bill came. (Levinson, p.186)

4.2.2 The Projection Problem

In addition, one of the problematic properties of presuppositions is known as the projection problem. This refers to how presuppositions behave in complex sentences. Any theory attempting to explain how presuppositions are compositionally collected must address certain basic facts. These include the ability to overtly deny presuppositions without contradiction, the possibility of suspending presuppositions using if-clauses, and the filtering of presuppositions in specific contexts when they arise from compound sentences formed by connectives like "or" and "if...then." Frege believed that the meanings of sentences are composed of the meanings of their parts. This idea was initially extended to presuppositions by Langendoen & Savin (1971), suggesting that the presuppositions of a complex sentence are simply the sum of the presuppositions of its constituent parts (pp. 55-60). However, this simplistic

view of presuppositions in complex sentences has proven to be incorrect. Formulating a theory that accurately predicts which presuppositions are inherited by the complex whole has been extremely challenging. This challenge is known as the projection problem for presuppositions, and it is a defining characteristic of presuppositions in complex sentences. The projection problem has two aspects. On one hand, presuppositions exhibit unique behaviours in complex sentences, often persisting in contexts where entailments do not. For instance, consider the component sentence (4.27).

(4.27) Sheena's cousin is an architect.

which presupposes that Sheena has a brother and entails that he designs buildings. In a complex sentence like

(4.28) If Sheena's cousin is an architect, then she will ask to design her house,

the presupposition that Sheena has a brother persists, even though the entailment about his profession may not hold in the conditional context.

On the other hand, presuppositions can disappear in other contexts where one would expect them to persist, and where entailments would persist. For example, the sentence

(4.29) Alex regrets telling the secret

presupposes that Alex told the secret and entails his regret. However, in the complex sentence

(4.30) If Alex didn't tell the secret, he won't regret it

the presupposition that Alex told the secret disappears, while the entailment about his regret remains in the conditional context. Semantic theories of presupposition face difficulties because semantics aims to define stable and invariant meanings associated with expressions. However, presuppositions are not stable or invariant, making them challenging to fit into a systematic semantic framework. Due to these challenges and others identified by various researchers, semantic theories of presupposition have faced significant obstacles.

Additionally, presuppositions also exhibit a unique characteristic in that they can survive in contexts where entailments cannot, such as, modal contexts, conditionals, and disjunctions. For example, the sentence

(4.31) Jane knows that the Earth orbits the Sun

presupposes the fact of the Earth's orbit. In the modal context

(4.32) It is possible that Jane knows that the Earth orbits the Sun

the presupposition that the Earth orbits the Sun survives, even though the entailment about Jane's knowledge does not necessarily hold. These complexities highlight the challenges semantic theories face in defining stable and invariant meanings for presuppositions.

4.4 Pragmatic presuppositions

As observed in the discussion above, semantic presuppositions represent one distinct type of inference language. They are embedded within the meaning of certain linguistic expressions, independent of the context and remain unchanged even in negated forms. For example,

(4.33) John stopped eating meat.

(4.34) Semantic presupposition: John used to eat meat.

In this case, the sentence presupposes that John had the previous habit of consuming meat. This presupposition persists even when the sentence is negated, as in

(4.35) John didn't stop eating meat.

The presupposition remains that John had a prior habit of meat consumption.

By contrast, some presuppositions are contextually sensitive inferences that rely on the speaker, the context, and the appropriateness of a sentence. They are not inherently part of the meaning of linguistic expressions. Consider the following example:

(4.36) Why don't you come over for dinner?

(4.37) Pragmatic presupposition: The speaker assumes the listener is available and willing to join for dinner.

However, if the listener is unavailable or unwilling, this presupposition may not hold true.

It is crucial to recognise that while semantic presuppositions relate to word and clause meanings, the presupposition in (4.37) is more about the speaker's assumption that the hearer is free to join for dinner. For this reason, this presupposition is called pragmatic presuppositions.

Another example of pragmatic presupposition is due to Keenan about the use of the pronouns "tu" and "vous" in French. They carry certain presuppositions about the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Specifically, when "tu" is used, it presupposes that the addressee is either an

animal, a child, socially inferior to the speaker, or personally close to the speaker. On the other hand, when "vous" is used, the opposite implication arises (as quoted in Levinson, 1983, p. 177). Keenan argued that these inferences, which go beyond the truth conditions of the sentence, should be classified as pragmatic presuppositions rather than semantic presuppositions.

Stalnaker (1972) describes pragmatic presupposition in "Pragmatics" as follows:

> "To presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to presume that others involved **in the context** (emphasis added) do the same. This does not imply that the person need have any particular mental attitude toward the proposition, or that he needs assume anything about the mental attitudes of others in the context. Presuppositions are probably best viewed as complex dispositions which are manifested in linguistic behaviour. One has presuppositions in virtue of the statements he makes, the questions he asks, the commands he issues. Presuppositions are propositions implicitly supposed before the relevant linguistic business is transacted" (p. 387–8).

Grice (1967, 1981), Schiffer (1972), and Lewis (1969) had employed similar notions. Stalnaker (1974) makes a Gricean formulation of pragmatic presupposition as follows:

> "A proposition P is a pragmatic presupposition of a speaker **in a given context** (emphasis added) just in case the speaker assumes or believes that P, assumes or believes that his addressee assumes or believes that P, and assumes or believes that his addressee recognizes that he is making these assumptions, or has these beliefs" (p. 200).

It is evident from the examples listed above in (4.11) -(4.17) that the semantic specification of triggers in the lexicon determines their PSPs. This fact poses a problem for the pragmatic view of PSP, since it can be argued that if semantic content triggers PSPs, then they cannot be pragmatic. While semantic meanings are truth-conditional, pragmatic inferences are non-truth conditional. Several attempts have been made to reconcile the incontrovertible fact of semantic triggering with pragmatic inferences. The most credible theory of

pragmatic PSP is due to Gazdar (1979a, 1979b), which explains a large palette of inconsistent facts that had been uncovered about semantic presupposition, including the intractable issues with the defeasibility of PSPs and the projection problem. Gazdar's theory tackles the issue of presupposition cancellation by taking into account background knowledge and contextual assumptions.

According to Gazdar's theory, presuppositions can be cancelled if they clash with what is already known or assumed in the context. For instance, if a presupposition contradicts the existing background knowledge, it will not be incorporated into the context. This differs from other theories that rely on specific linguistic triggers to cancel presuppositions.

Additionally, Gazdar's theory considers contextual assumptions when determining the presuppositions of complex sentences. This means that the presuppositions of a sentence can be influenced by what is already assumed or taken for granted in the context. For example, let's consider the sentence:

(4.38) King Charles I had his head cut off half an hour before he finished filing through the bars (Levinson 212).

In this case, the presupposition associated with the *before*-clause is cancelled because it contradicts the contextual assumption that individuals without heads are unable to continue performing actions.

Gazdar's theory not only addresses cases of contextual defeasibility but also offers predictions for solving the projection problem in sentences of varying complexity. It provides a systematic approach to handling presuppositions based on background knowledge and contextual assumptions.

The analysis that follows is based on the following core facts of PSPs.

1. Presuppositions is a non-truth conditional pragmatic inference.
2. It is accessed from a common ground of contextual information that a speaker and their hearers share. A speaker may add background information that is not widely known, which then get incorporated in the common ground.
3. Additional context is provided by the event parameters of a public speech, viz. time, place and occasion at which it is given.
4. Presuppositions may be triggered for hearers by lexical items and expressions in utterances in their context.

4.3 Analysis of the pragmatic presuppositions in Obama's speeches

I now present an analysis of presuppositions in excerpts from a selection of Obama's speeches that he delivered at pivotal moments in his political journey, addressing topics pertinent to both national and global audiences of the time. It is our claim that the audience inferring presuppositions in a speech constitute one element in the colloquy between orator and audience.

The first step in the analysis was to identify the presupposition triggers in Obama's speeches. I used a program created for the purpose to identify tokens of the triggers listed in Levinson (1983) and Potts (2014). The search identified tokens of *know*, *begin*, *start*, *realize* in his speeches.

Know and *know that* appears 70 and 18 times respectively in the speeches selected for this study, and they occur in one of these structures in the speeches:

a. *Know* + *that* - complement clause

b. *Know* + (that) - complement clause, in which the complementiser *that* is elided, as in "We know (that) the battle ahead will be long" (Yes, we can)

c. *Know of* + NP, as in "I know of the man" (A More Perfect Union)

d. *Know* + wh-complement clause, as in "She knows how America can change" (Victory speech 2008)

e. *Know* in the imperative mood, as in "But know this America" (Inaugural address 2009)

f. *Know* without object/intransitive, as in "A Republican…wanted to know her" (Tucson Memorial Service speech)

The sub-categorisation distribution of *know* in structures (a) and (b) defines the data for presupposition analysis, and also for the analysis of implicature in chapter 5.

I then locate these utterances in their worlds of their socio-cultural, domestic and international political contexts in order to infer the presuppositions Obama embeds in them. Consider how presuppositions can be inferred in the complement of the factive verb *know/know that*. *Know* presuppose the truth of its complement clauses. For example, in his DNC, 2004 speech, Obama declares,

(4.39) We know that our nation's legacy is not confined to the boundaries of this continent.

In this utterance, Obama presupposes the existence of the political entity America, which he refers to deictically as "our nation," its geographical extent, the North American continent, its "legacy" and the proposition coalescing them regarding America's legacy extending beyond the borders of the North American continent. Obama makes these presuppositions in the context of American supremacy post World War II. His audience can infer them because these facts exist in their knowledge of America and her place in history.

Just as in the case of *know*, the sub-categorisation frames of *realize*, *begin* and *start* define the data used in this study, and the presuppositions they carry are inferred in the same manner as described above for *now*.

Further, the presupposition I identify are those that are associated with the recurring themes in Obama's speeches. As already elaborated in chapter 3, the labels of the themes have been borrowed from the Pew Research Center Inventory.

About Family and Relationships

The portrayal of familial connection and support in his speeches showcases the significance of family and relationships in shaping his journey and ideals, as in this excerpt from DNC 2004. Obama says,

> "My parents shared not only an improbable love, they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined -- They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential.
>
> They' re both passed away now.
>
> And yet, I *know* (emphasis added) that on this night they look down on me with great pride." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

Obama wants his audience to understand the background he shares about his family, "I know that on this night they look down on me with great pride." This assertion is a summation of five bits of information that he adds to what they already know about his family. He mentions that his parents "improbable love, their "faith in the possibilities" of America, their belief "in a tolerant America," is the reason why they named him Barack and their hope of seeing

him “in the best schools in the land” and their belief that people who weren’t rich could “achieve [their potential]. The clause “*I know that”* presupposes a profound certainty in the views that he has laid out before his audience. The audience recognises Obama belief in his parents’ pride at his achievements that has brought him to deliver the keynote address at the 2004 DNC.

He mentions his parents, their aspirations for him, the best colleges in the country and the American Dream (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). These elements define the world of his assertions about his family. The analysis of the excerpts that follow, also identify worlds within which the presuppositions he makes on the various topics may be inferred, though I will not identify them separately in order to maintain a level of readability.

Further, in the Victory Speech delivered in 2008, a historic moment for the country and a supremely fulfilling moment for Obama personally, he enlarges the world of his family by mentioning his wife and children and his deceased grandmother. Obama states the following in the Victory Speech,

> “I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of our family and the love of my life, our nation’s next First Lady, Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that’s coming with us to the White House. And while she’s no longer with us, I *know* (emphasis added) my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and *know* (emphasis added) that my debt to them is beyond measure.” (Obama, 2008, November 4)

By stating, “And while she’s no longer with us, I know my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am,” Obama points to a lasting connection with his deceased grandmother, a connection that will always endure for him. He also acknowledges the enduring impact his family has had on his life. By using the factive verb *know* in this context the truth of the statement is presupposed by Obama “my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am.” President-Elect Obama presents this information as something he believes to be true or knows to be true. The

audience, upon hearing this, would infer Obama's belief is grounded in his faith, that his grandmother and other deceased family members are watching him.

When the audience hear him say "the family that made me who I am," they presuppose that his relatives have had a consequential role in his development. Furthermore, by expressing, "I miss them tonight, and know that my debt to them is beyond measure," Obama not only reveals his emotional attachment to them, but also presupposes an indebtedness to his family, deeply grateful to and appreciative of their influence on his character and accomplishments. The use of *know that* further emphasises the certainty and truth of his statement, making his gratitude and emotional connection to his family evident to the audience.

The two previous excerpts introduce first, his parents and then, his wife and children and his deceased grandmother. Towards the end of two terms as President, Obama makes a third reference in which he extends the world of his family still further to include in it his grandparents and his ancestors. In this manner, the world of Obama's family would have got added to the background knowledge his audience would have had about him.

> "And it's got me thinking about the story I told you 12 years ago tonight, about my Kansas grandparents and the things they taught me when I was growing up. (Applause.) See, my grandparents, they came from the heartland. Their ancestors *began* (emphasis added) settling there about 200 years ago. I don't know if they have their birth certificates -- (laughter) -- but they were there. (Applause.) They were Scotch-Irish mostly -- farmers, teachers, ranch hands, pharmacists, oil rig workers. Hardy, small town folks. Some were Democrats, but a lot of them -- maybe even most of them -- were Republicans. Party of Lincoln" (Obama, 2016, July 27).

Obama lays out his personal historical connection to America and his American identity when he shares with the audience that his ancestors "*began* settling there about 200 years ago." It marks momentous events in his family history. The audience, whether they were listening live or online, or on social media, would have heard an echo of their family's history in the story of Obama's family history. It emphasises the endurance and fortitude his ancestors would

have had to muster, just as the families in his audience would have had to. The applause that follows as mentioned in the transcript of the speech, underscores the audience's appreciation of this personal narrative, and thereby, connecting with Obama's family history and the broader history of migration to America.

In addition, Obama's mention of their occupations—farmers, teachers, ranch hands, pharmacists, and oil rig workers—could have kindled his audience's recollection of the occupations of their ancestors. In sum, it illustrates the diverse contribution of hardworking people to the fabric of the country. This narrative not only honours his ancestors, but also celebrates the contributions of immigrants and migrants throughout American history.

Each of the three excerpts on Family deals with an expanding world of his family. It begins with references to his family in the 2004 DNC speech followed by his acknowledging his wife and daughters and his grandmother in his 2008 victory speech, and finally, his grandparents and his ancestors in the 2016 DNC speech. What he presupposes and communicates to his audience are positive aspects of the family as a unit, their hopes, their support, their hard work as citizens.

About Inequality

The issues related to race and ethnicity and their consequent inequality appear frequently in Obama's speeches. In the DNC 2004 speech, Obama presupposes a shared thinking within inner-city neighbourhoods about the challenges black youth faced as they obtain their education and how the larger community viewed this effort when he reveals,

> "Go in -- Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach our kids to learn; they *know* (emphasis added) that parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They *know* (emphasis added) those things." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

The factive trigger *know* occurs in the last sentence in this excerpt. The deictic *those* point to the things he has said prior to this utterance. These utterances are set in the world of a "inner city neighborhood," typical of such communities around the country. Obama presupposes that in these communities

the degree of parental involvement in their children's education is low, even though parents know "that governments alone can't teach our kids to learn." He also presupposes that children are not motivated to dream big for themselves when he says "that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations." Obama also knows that children in inner cities spend too much time watching television, and therefore they do not achieve. Obama is also aware of the damaging impact of the stereotype associating the academic struggle of black children with "acting white." Obama shares this understanding of the reality of inner-city communities regarding the barriers to educational success and the need for proactive measures to address them. In fact, each of these statements are in the common ground shared by Obama and communities across America. The repeated use of *know* emphasises this shared belief within these communities about these crucial aspects of education. Therefore, he presents this information as something that "folks" believe to be true or know to be true. On top of the devastating consequences of inequality in educational opportunities and attainment, Americans encounter inequality in access to medicine and healthcare and endure poverty, while others benefit from accumulated wealth (Zajacova & Lawrence, 2018, pp. 273-289). The passage from Barack Obama's Yes, We Can speech spotlight the need to radically change policy relating to medicine, health, income and wealth. Obama proposes,

> "Our new American majority can end the outrage of unaffordable, unavailable health care in our time. We can bring doctors and patients, workers and businesses, Democrats and Republicans together, and we can tell the drug and insurance industry that, while they get a seat at the table, they don't get to buy every chair, not this time, not now. Our new majority can end the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs overseas and put a middle-class tax cut in the pockets of working Americans who deserve it. We can *stop* (emphasis added) sending our children to schools with corridors of shame and *start* (emphasis added) putting them on a pathway to success. We can *stop* (emphasis added) talking about how great teachers are and *start* (emphasis added) rewarding them for their greatness by

> giving them more pay and more support. We can do this with our new majority." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

Obama invites the audience to see his vision for revitalising America's healthcare, economy and school education by first sharing his thoughts about these issues. Obama expresses the audience's frustration with the existing healthcare system, which he and his audience know makes healthcare "unaffordable" and also "unavailable." This presupposition about healthcare is triggered by the use of the verb *end*, suggesting a reality that has been and is the common experience of Americans. His idiomatic assertion that while the drug and insurance industry "get a seat at the table, they don't get to buy every chair" is Obama's and his audience's understanding as to why medical services are beyond the reach of many people and also unavailable to them. The second use of *end* in this excerpt presupposes that corporations have got tax breaks when they sent American jobs overseas, as a result of which the earnings of the middle class got reduced. Obama's utterance voices the possibility of not sending American children "to schools with corridors of shame," highlighting the dismal state of schools that are inadequately equipped and teachers poorly paid. Were this to happen, he suggests children can be put "on a pathway to success" in a complete reversal of the present situation. "We can start putting them on a pathway to success," the verb *start* points to the current situation, where children attend inadequately equipped schools and poorly paid teachers. The audience would have known all this about the school system.

The applause that punctuates Obama's statements marks the audience's appreciation of his assessment about healthcare and education. They perceive Obama's use of *end* and *start* as powerful commitments to addressing longstanding issues of economic inequality and healthcare access. These verbs signify the shift he wants to make from merely discussing problems to actively pursuing solutions, rallying the audience behind the promise of real change.

These actions, while they are indispensable, are not as paramount as the commitment to the vision of America's founding document. Particularly, forceful expression of this view is in A More Perfect Union speech:

> "Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution -- a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a

> Constitution that promised its people liberty and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time. And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part -- through protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience, and always at great risk -- to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time. This was one of the tasks we set forth at the *beginning* of this presidential campaign: to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring, and more prosperous America." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

Beginning, even though it is a gerund, functions as a trigger that presupposes the moment when Obama set his presidential campaign in motion. The utterance "This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this presidential campaign" implies when the campaign started, the goal of continuing the long struggle for justice, equality and prosperity got under way. It presupposes that from the very outset, Obama's campaign was committed to carrying forward the historical legacy of fighting for a more just, equal, and prosperous America, linking the current political efforts to the broader and longer historical struggle for civil rights, freedom and advancement.

Later in the same speech, Obama articulates a vision of how prosperity and societal advancement can be achieved through inclusive investment in health, welfare, and education, regardless of race or background of the beneficiaries. In his A More Perfect Union Speech, he asserts

> "It requires all Americans to *realize* (emphasis added) that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams, that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

Each of the three excerpts on 'Inequality' addresses interconnected worlds shaped by systemic disparities in education, healthcare, and socio-economic opportunities. In his 2004 DNC speech, Obama focuses on the inner-city neighbourhoods, highlighting the challenges faced by black youth due to stereotypes and a lack of parental and community support in education. His *Yes, We Can* speech from 2008 shifts to the broader world of Americans grappling with economic and healthcare inequalities, emphasising the need for structural reforms to empower the middle class and improve schools. Finally, in *A More Perfect Union,* Obama places these inequalities within the historical context of America's struggle for justice and equal rights, urging inclusive investment in health, welfare, and education for all children as a pathway to shared prosperity. Across these worlds, Obama presupposes shared frustrations with existing systems and communicates a vision of the change needed to address longstanding inequalities in American society.

About the Civil Rights Movement

If it were not for the racial inequality in the US, there would never have been the need to launch a decades-long civil rights movement. Obama draws the attention of his audience to the unfinished tasks of the movement in several of his speeches. In his Selma speech, Obama cautions,

> "Of course, a more common mistake is to suggest that Ferguson is an isolated incident; that racism is banished; that the work that drew men and women to Selma is now complete, and that whatever racial tensions remain are a consequence of those seeking to play the "race card" for their own purposes. We don't need the Ferguson report to *know* (emphasis added) that's not true. We just need to open our eyes, and our ears, and our hearts to know that this nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us." (Obama, 2015, March 07)

From the audience's perspective, the use of *know* in the context of the Ferguson incident, in which an unarmed Black teenager was shot dead by a police officer, indicates the continuance of racism in America. The complement of *know,* "that's not true," asserts the negation of the predicates of the referents of the deictic *that*, viz., "that racism is [NOT] banished; that the

work that drew men and women to Selma is [still NOT] complete; that whatever racial tensions remain are [NOT] a consequence of those seeking to play the 'race card' for their own purpose." President Obama presents this information as something he believes to be true or knows to be true. The audience understands this as a definitive rejection of the notion that incidents like Ferguson are isolated occurrences, and instead, points to the need for acknowledging the ongoing racial tensions and issues that persist in the United States.

Additionally, the factive verb *know* in this context highlights the theme of historical consciousness urging the audience to be aware of the deep-rooted racial issues that continue to affect society. President Obama refers to the Ferguson report, which "revealed a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct within the Ferguson Police Department that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and federal statutory law" (Civil Rights Division, 2015, p. 4). The report also found "Ferguson's approach to law enforcement both reflects and reinforces racial bias, including stereotyping" (Civil Rights Division, p. 1). The audience understands that the Report is not necessary to prove the existence of racism; rather, the knowledge of the nation's past struggles with racism is sufficient to inform their perception of the present. In another part of the Selma Speech Obama goes on to say,

> "We *know* (emphasis added) the march is not yet over. We *know* the race is not yet won. We *know* (emphasis added) that reaching that blessed destination where we are judged, all of us, by the content of our character requires admitting as much, facing up to the truth. "We are capable of bearing a great burden," James Baldwin once wrote, "once we discover that the burden is reality and arrive where reality is." (Obama, 2015, March 07)

President Obama uses *know* to emphasise "the burden of reality," as Baldwin described the actual state of the racial situation in the US in his essay, "Down at the cross: Letter from a region in my mind," (Baldwin, 1963). The reality is that the protest continues even when the Selma march is over, that racial justice is still out of reach because "the race is not yet won," that people are still judged by "the color" of their skin, not "by the content of our [their] character." Obama's audience would have recognised these presuppositions. The phrase,

"the content of our character" has a storied history. Frederick Douglass wrote in an article in *NorthStar* 160 years ago,

> "What we, the colored people want, is CHARACTER [emphasis in original], and this, nobody can give us. It is a thing that we must get for ourselves. We must labor for it. It is gained by toil, ---hard toil. Neither the sympathy, nor the generosity, of our friends can give it to us. It is attainable, ---yes, thank God, it is attainable. It is attainable, but each must attain it for himself. 'There is gold in the earth, but we must DIG it.' So it is with character." (Douglass, 1848)

The phrase finds its most well-known iteration in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech, in which he dreams of the day when his children "will not be judged by the colour of the skin but by the content of our character" (King, 1963).

These statements are part of the knowledge that Obama and his addresses share, and that civil rights have not been fully secured and equality has not yet been achieved.

Each of the three excerpts on the Civil Rights Movement explores overlapping worlds defined by racial inequality, historical consciousness, and the ongoing struggle for justice. In his Selma speech, Obama puts the audience in the world of Ferguson, highlighting its racial injustices as a microcosm of America's broader racial history. He then shifts to the world of Selma, invoking its legacy as a touchstone for the unfinished march toward equality. Finally, Obama connects these contemporary and historical worlds to a philosophical one, drawing on the reflections of James Baldwin, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King Jr., to emphasize the enduring need for character and accountability. Through these worlds, Obama presupposes the shared understanding of past struggles, acknowledges the persistence of racial disparities, and communicates the collective responsibility to confront and overcome these realities.

About Politics and Policy

In addition to family and issue of race, Obama's speeches refer to and elaborates on several themes that falls under the rubric of politics and policy. The rest of this chapter analyses excerpts that touch upon these issues of domestic and international interest.

Obama celebrates citizens' rights in the DNC Speech 2004:

> "That is the true genius of America, a faith -- a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and *know* (emphasis added) that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted -- at least most of the time." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

Every item in this inventory of the American experience that attests to everyday freedoms that people enjoy would have been their common knowledge and true for a majority of Americans. Obama presupposes facts of life that Americans know—putting children to bed at night safely, after they have been fed. He presupposes the freedoms that follow from the First Amendment (U.S. Const. amend. I), the freedom of thought and expression. He expects his audience to know that these freedoms Americans take for granted are not available in some parts of the world. Even if they didn't know it already, they now know that the suppression of such freedoms in some countries has manifested itself in a "sudden knock on the door." He presupposes what his audience also know that they can exercise the democratic right of choosing their leaders in local and federal governments. Obama presents these as representing the "true genius of America," which he also calls "small miracles," thereby planting a novel understanding of life in America in the minds of his audience.

But Obama decries the polarisation that consumes America in his Yes, We Can Speech. He critiques it saying,

> "That's what's happening in America right now; change is what's happening in America…Democrats, independents and Republicans who are tired of the division and distraction that has clouded Washington, who *know* (emphasis added) that we can disagree without being disagreeable, who understand that, if we mobilize our voices to challenge the money and influence that stood in our way and challenge ourselves to reach for something better, there is no problem we cannot solve, there is no destiny that we cannot fulfil." (Obama, 2008, January 08)

The starting point in this excerpt is Obama's belief that the country is

deeply polarised, which has resulted in a corrupted civil discourse. He knows that Americans, of all political persuasion hold differing opinions, even to the point of being hostile and rude, and offensively disagree with one another. He puts forward the idea to his audience that despite political divisions, it is possible to engage in respectful dialogue. Obama next refers to the lobbying that happens in Washington and the influence of money on policy decisions. As a result, he conveys to his audience that there are problems that have not been solved and goals have not been achieved. He therefore suggests that, when Washington engages in meaningful dialogue, problems can be solved and goals achieved.

Obama highlights the same issue in the 2008 Victory Speech warning his audience,

> "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there. There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President, and we know (emphasis added) that the government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face." (Obama, 2008, November 04)

In this Victory speech, the presupposition triggering factive verb *know* occurs towards the end of this excerpt. In the first part, Obama describes the difficulties in executing his policies as President. He compares the time he would require to achieve his policy goals using the metaphors of travelling on a road and climbing a mountain. He first negates the expectation that the road will be short saying "the road ahead will be long." Second, he negates the presupposition that achieving his goals would be an easy climb, saying that "it will be steep." Either ways, he quashes the hope that success will be achieved within the duration of his four-year presidency, saying, "we may not get there in one year or one term. He counters any scepticism that people might have in this matter by promising that the nation will reach the end of the journey or the mountaintop by saying, "we as a people will get there." This journey or this climb, he presupposes cannot be easy, without any obstacles or failures, which is the reason he negates these thoughts as well when he says, "there will be setbacks and false starts." Obama is also certain that many people will not agree

with his decisions or policies. Knowing that he cannot please everyone, he presupposes that, while his government cannot solve every issue, there would be some problems that can be resolved. He is aware that some people would believe that governments are not always transparent. His counter to this belief is that h will always be honest with the American people "about the challenges we [they] face."

The solution to the polarisation between the political parties is, as Obama, puts it more political and civic engagement, a theme that recurs constantly in his speeches during his election campaign and his Presidency. In Obama's 2008 Yes, We Can speech, he highlights the importance of working together to transform America's healthcare and economy. Obama asserts,

> "It was the call of workers who organized, women who reached for the ballot, a President who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king(sic) who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land: Yes, we can, to justice and equality. Yes, we can -- to opportunity and prosperity. Yes we can heal this nation. Yes we can repair this world. Yes we can. And so, tomorrow, as we take the campaign south and west, as we learn that the struggles of the textile workers in Spartanburg are not so different than the plight of the dishwasher in Las Vegas, that the hopes of the little girl who goes to the crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of L.A., we will remember that there is something happening in America, that we are not as divided as our politics suggest, that we are one people, we are one nation. And, together, we will *begin* (highlight added) the next great chapter in the American story, with three words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea: Yes, we can. Thank you, New Hampshire. Thank you. Thank you." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

The change of state verb *begin* in this excerpt symbolises the initiation of a significant new phase or action. The phrase "we will begin the next great chapter in the American story" presupposes that his Presidency intends to step from the current "great" chapter of American history and start another great chapter. This verb choice indicates the transition about to take place, marking the beginning of a new era. Obama sets the background to this new beginning

in three historic events that support the view of what America can achieve when they set themselves seemingly ambitious goals. The three historic events that he refers to are the Women's Suffergate Movement, President John F Kennedy's Moon Shot and the culmination of the Civil Rights Movement in Washington DC with Martin Luther King Jr's "I have a Dream" speech. Obama presupposes that "justice and equality" and "opportunity and prosperity" were the result of women who saw themselves equal to men, of a nation that believed they could land on the moon and of the vision of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement that African Americans could obtain civil rights. So it is that Obama pledges to continue his campaign in the same spirit, believing that the inequalities that still persists and the injustice that still endures can be overcome with strong national resolve. He sees a commonality that unites America when he mentions the struggles of textile workers in Spartanburg and the plight of the dishwasher in Las Vegas, and connects these individual experiences to a broader narrative of shared challenges and aspirations, despite the divisive politics that engulfs the nation.

The use of *begin* highlights the hopeful commencement of America's journey towards a better future, and marks a shift from political division to the pursuit of justice, equality, opportunity, and prosperity for all. By laying stress on the verb *begin*, the audience's role in this hoped for transition is emphasised with the refrain of "Yes, we can."

The Yes, We Can speech articulates Obama's vision of political and civic engagement in healthcare and economy. A more personal instance of civic engagement can be witnessed in the narrative shared by Obama in his 2008, A More Perfect Union speech, in which he recounts the emotional interaction between Ashley, a young white girl, and an elderly black man during a campaign event. This story compels his audience to recognise the importance of small, meaningful interactions at the grassroot level in driving significant political and societal change. Obama narrates,

> "Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different stories and different reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time. And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he doesn't bring up a specific issue. He

> does not say health care or the economy. He does not say education or the war. He does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, "I am here because of Ashley." "I'm here because of Ashley."
>
> Now, by itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children.
>
> But it is where we *start* (emphasis added). It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to *realize* (emphasis added) over the course of the 221 years since a band of patriots signed that document right here in Philadelphia, that is where perfection *begins* (emphasis added). Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

By focusing on the verbs *start*, *begin*, and *realize*, Obama conveys his conviction that meaningful change starts with small actions, grows stronger over time, and it is rooted in a shared understanding of the importance of strong activism. These assertions would help the audience to see their role in this ongoing journey towards greater equality and to recognise the power of personal relationships for the common good. The narrative suggests that the incident relating to Ashley and the elderly Black man happened at a campaign meeting where people are asked "why they are supporting the (his) campaign." People support a campaign because it aligns with their thinking on issues and propose concrete steps to address problems such as healthcare, the economy, education or America's involvement in foreign wars. People also support a campaign because of their affinity with the candidate. These presuppositions are denied because the elderly man supports the campaign only because Ashley does. This is what Obama refers to as a "single moment of recognition." Obama presupposes that this kind of recognition is significant to some extent but it "is not enough." It is necessary but not sufficient to get policies off the ground, such as giving "health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children." Obama puts forward the idea to his audience that a forceful acceptance of each other is a requirement to make the American union stronger not just of states, but also of peoples. He observes that, over the past 221 years since Independence, each generation of Americans have had to learn this lesson

about mutual recognition. It is not a national consciousness that perpetuates itself. The audience is reminded that the many generations before them have acknowledged the importance of striving for a more perfect union. This shared realisation reinforces the idea that it is the responsibility of all Americans to continue this effort.

Yet Obama is aware that, at the macro-level, policy issues can be divisive. Even so, he envisages a citizenry intent on nation building in spite of such divisions. He assures his audience at his Victory speech,

> "But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And above all, I will ask you join in the work of remaking this nation theonly way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty- one years – block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand. What *began* (emphasis added) twenty-one months ago in the depths of winter must not end on this autumn night. This victory alone is not the change we seek – it is only the chance for us to make that change." (Obama, 2008, November 04)

In this speech, Barack Obama uses the change of state verb *began* to emphasise the continuity of his campaign and its goals into his Presidency. The audience understand the clause "What began twenty-one months ago in the depths of winter," as describing the manner in which an outlying campaign became a historic one on the day of his victory and his becoming President-elect. This clause presupposes that before this initiative *began*, there was a period of indecisiveness or a state of uncertainty. For the audience, the use of *began* underscores that the campaign has been evolving and progressing over the past twenty-one months. It highlights the journey's beginning and emphasises that this victory is not the endpoint, but merely a milestone.

While the victory itself is a significant milestone, it is not the ultimate goal, but rather an opportunity to continue the work of remaking the nation. The use of *began* emphasises the importance of sustained effort and action in achieving meaningful change.

Obama in his 2009 Inaugural Address, returns to this theme, by exhorting his audience on the Washington Mall and across the nation to apply themselves to renewal and change in the face of personal and national adversity. Obama

affirms that

> "This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis *began (*emphasis added). Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week, or last month, or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed**.** *Starting* (emphasis added) today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and *begin* (emphasis added) again the work of remaking America. (Applause.)." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

The crisis that Obama refers to is the Great Recession that began December 2007 and lasted until June 2009, "the longest and deepest economic downturn in many countries, including the United States, since the Great Depression" of the 1930s (Duignan, 2024). An article describing its origin mentions that it was caused by an abnormal rise in unemployment rate, fall in home prices as well as the net worth of US households (Rich, 2013). It was against this background that Obama gave his inaugural address in January 2009. His starting point list the strengths of America. He begins with the fact that America has been "the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth;" American workers have been productive and inventive and American goods and services have been in demand around the world. And finally, their capacity to achieve all this has not weakened. Even while the recession was exacting a high toll on the lives of Americans, fundamentals of the country's economy remained strong. These are the very strengths that he believes will put the country on the road to recovery, "and begin again the work of remaking America," reminiscent of the remaking of America after the Great Depression. Since people had literally and metaphorically fallen to the ground and had got covered in dust, they had to pick themselves up and dust themselves off," that is, resolve to start over.

In an excerpt from his 2011 Tucson Memorial Service speech, I find Obama talking about civic engagement again. He paints a picture of an imaginary young girl's early journey towards understanding democracy and citizenship. He emphasises the innocence and optimism of youth, encouraging the audience to reflect on the child's uncluttered perspective. Obama asks his

audience to

> "Imagine -- imagine for a moment, here was a young girl who was just becoming aware of our democracy; just *beginning* (emphasis added) to understand the obligations of citizenship; just *starting* (emphasis added) to glimpse the fact that some day she, too, might play a part in shaping her nation's future. She had been elected to her student council. She saw public service as something exciting and hopeful. She was off to meet her congresswoman, someone she was sure was good and important and might be a role model. She saw all this through the eyes of a child, undimmed by the cynicism or vitriol that we adults all too often just take for granted." (Obama, 2011, January 12)

Obama describes what civic engagement should look like in this story. At the beginning he mentions what the young girl is beginning to know about democracy, "the obligations of citizenship" and what her active civic role might look like. In other words, he describes the girl's political awakening to his audience. His story continues with the assumption that her awakening has been set off by something like being elected to her student council. Obama conveys the idea that the girl viewed "public service as something exciting and hopeful." He ascribes to the girl her opinion of the Congresswoman she was going to meet as being "good," "important," and "a role model." The point of this narrative is to counteract Obama's thinking that adults' political viewpoints about democracy and the duties of a citizen are tarnished with "cynicism or vitriol." Obama's perspective about ideal civic engagement is contained in this fictional account of the young girl's coming of political age.

Obama emphasises political and civic engagement at the DNC 2016 as he canvassed for Hillary Clinton, who was the Democratic nominee for President that year. He emphasised his significant political achievements as President that have had a positive impact on America, its national pride and international engagement. The audience understands that Obama is celebrating the transformative steps taken under his leadership. He states,

> "After a century of trying, we declared that health care in America is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for everybody. (Applause.) After decades of talk, we finally *began* (highlight added) to wean ourselves off foreign oil. We doubled our

> production of clean energy. (Applause.) We brought more of our troops home to their families, and we delivered justice to Osama bin Laden. (Applause.) Through diplomacy, we shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program. (Applause.) We opened up a new chapter with the people of Cuba, brought nearly 200 nations together around a climate agreement that could save this planet for our children. (Applause.)." (Obama, 2016, July 27)

Prior to his Presidency, health care was a privilege that only a few people had. When Obama states, "After a century of trying, we declared that health care in America is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for everybody," (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2013). The document from the Kaiser Family Foundation outlines key moments in U.S. healthcare reform history, including the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s. It discusses Bill Clinton's failed 1990s reform attempt and Obama's Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010. The ACA aimed to expand healthcare access, including Medicaid and health exchanges.

The audience understands this as a monumental achievement. When Obama uses the verb *began* in the phrase "we finally began to wean ourselves off foreign oil," he asks the audience to consider the critical shift in energy policy during his Presidency. The change of state verb *began* presupposes that before this point, the country was heavily dependent on foreign oil. This highlights the transition towards energy independence and sustainability. Similarly, by saying, "We brought more of our troops home to their families, and we delivered justice to Osama bin Laden," Obama underscores significant milestones in national security and military policy, showing the concrete results of his administration's efforts.

The audience perceives Obama's use of *began* as a way to highlight his achievements and the promise of continued progress under the new Democratic nominee for president, Hillary Clinton. His audience notes that he conveys accomplishments to inspire confidence in the measures that require to be taken to build on these foundations. The examples of doubling clean energy production, bringing troops home, and engaging in significant diplomatic efforts illustrate the concrete actions taken to improve the nation and the world, reinforcing the idea that these initiatives are just the beginning of a broader transformation.

The call to political and civic engagement in the speeches I have

considered so far is particularly appropriate because of the diverse demographic of America. His 2009 Inaugural Address emphasises this character of America as a nation.

> "For we *know* (emphasis added) that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

From the audience's perspective, Obama's words at the very outset affirm their conviction in the value of diversity. By stating "we know," he underscores his belief in the strength of America's "patchwork heritage." He negates the idea that many Americans may consider demographic diversity to be the country's "weakness." One indicator of this diversity is that despite the different religious identities of Americans as "Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers," America is, as he says, "a nation." The second indicator of diversity Americans know about is the diverse backgrounds and cultures of the people. About this indicator, Obama emphasises that it contributes to the strength of the nation. His mention of the various religious and cultural identities highlights the broad spectrum of American society. This diversity, in his view, is the reason the country could endure "civil war and segregation," and emerge "stronger and more united." He acknowledges that "old hatreds" and tribalism still exists, but he suggests that having overcome the devastations of the Civil War and segregation, the notion will eventually wipe out these hatreds.

Each of the excerpts on 'Politics and Policy' explores a world shaped by civic engagement, national challenges, and the pursuit of transformative change. Obama begins with the world of American freedom in the 2004 DNC speech, emphasizing basic rights and democratic participation, which he frames as the "true genius of America." He contrasts this with the polarised political world in the *Yes, We Can* speech, where he critiques division and advocates for respectful

dialogue and collective action to address systemic issues like healthcare and economic disparities. His 2008 victory speech paints a world of daunting challenges—metaphorically represented by "steep climb" and "long road"—while promising a shared journey toward progress through honesty and perseverance. In later speeches, Obama delves into the worlds of grassroots activism and policy achievements. In A More Perfect Union speech, he recounts a poignant interaction to highlight the significance of individual recognition of one another, specially across racial lines in strengthening the union. In his 2009 inaugural address, he emphasizes renewal amid the Great Recession, urging Americans to rebuild by leveraging the nation's enduring strengths. His 2016 DNC speech celebrates the world of his policy successes, from healthcare reform to energy independence, while envisioning further progress under continued Democratic leadership. Across these worlds, Obama presupposes shared beliefs in democracy, diversity, and responsibility, consistently urging his audience to engage in building a stronger, more unified nation.

About US Elections

One final issue relating to politics and policy that Obama highlights is that of US Elections. In his 2008 President Elect Victory Speech, Obama reflects upon the unconventional path that led him to the Presidency, emphasising the grassroots origin of his campaign and communicates this view to his audience. Obama states:

> "I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't start (highlight added) with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington – it began (highlight added) in the backyards of Des Moines and the living rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston. It was built by working men and women who dug into what little savings they had to give five dollars and ten dollars and twenty dollars to this cause." (Obama, 2008, November 4)

The change of state verbs *start* and *began*, in the given excerpt, indicate the initial state of his campaign. The use of *start* in "We didn't start with much money or many endorsements" accentuates the lack of financial resources and endorsements, highlighting the humble origins of the campaign. Similarly, the verb *began* in "it began in the backyards of Des Moines and the living rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston," the verb *began* presupposes that

the campaign's origins were rooted in grassroot settings, rather than in the centers of political power. This choice of verbs underlines the campaign's foundation on the support of ordinary people. The audience understands that the campaign transitioned from these modest beginnings to a significant and impactful movement.

About eleven months earlier, in his Yes, We Can speech, he urged his audience to exercise their right as citizens to participate in the election process and vote. He highlighted a unique vision that went beyond his own presidential goals, stressing the power of exercising one's civic obligations properly. He declares,

> "All of the candidates in this race share these goals. All of the candidates in this race have good ideas and all are patriots who serve this country honorably. But the reason our campaign has always been different, the reason we *began* (emphasis added) this improbable journey almost a year ago is because it's not just about what I will do as president. It is also about what you, the people who love this country, the citizens of the United States of America, can do to change it. That's what this election is all about. That's why tonight belongs to you. It belongs to the organizers, and the volunteers, and the staff who believed in this journey and rallied so many others to join the cause." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

In the above paragraph, *began* marks the moment "almost a year ago" when Obama entered the Democratic primary, the starting point of a significant and purposeful journey and engagement in the election cycle that began the same year. He presupposes that his campaign is different because he has clear ideas about what he will do as president to bring about change in the country, and what the people can do to help bring about that change. The audience also understands that this journey was not just about Obama's efforts as a candidate, but also about their participatory role in it.

These two excerpts on US Elections delve into the still evolving world of Obama's campaign and the broader democratic process. It begins with the grassroots origins of his 2008 presidential campaign, as reflected in his victory speech, where he highlights its humble beginnings in the backyards and living rooms of ordinary Americans, emphasizing the role of small contributions and

widespread effort. Earlier, in his *Yes, We Can* speech, he had touched upon this vision by urging citizens to recognize their power to influence change through civic participation and voting. Obama presupposes and communicates the transformative role of grassroots engagement and the shared responsibility between leaders and citizens in shaping the nation's future.

About Religion

Religion has been constitutive of the fabric of America as a nation. There are no less than 13 sub topics related to religion in the list of research topics on the Pew Research Center website. Perhaps the fullest confession of his faith comes in his response to the controversy over his long-standing association with Reverend Jeremiah Wright, a pivotal figure who influenced his Christian faith and commitment to social justice. I discussed this controversy in chapter 3. About Jeremiah Wright, Obama states,

> "The man I met more than twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another, to care for the sick and lift up the poor. He is a man who served his country as a United States Marine, and who has studied and lectured at some of the finest universities and seminaries in the country, and who over 30 years has led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth -- by housing the homeless, ministering to the needy, providing day care services and scholarships and prison ministries, and reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS. In my first book, *Dreams from my Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity, and it goes as follows: People *began* (emphasis added) to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

Obama begins by mentioning details of Jeremiah Wright's life, focussing on his military service, his extraordinarily high education, his lecture tours, the caring ministry of the Church he led, as well as the spiritual grooming he received from the pastor. Obama goes on to describe his first service in Trinity Church by borrowing his description of it from his first book.

When Obama states, "People began to shout, to rise from their seats and

clap and cry out," the use of *began* as a change of state verb marks, perhaps, the unexpected moment when the tempo of worship shifts to a state of intense fervour. This implies that the audience was quiet before moving into a spiritually heightened involvement in the service. This shift in the tempo of worship is characteristic not only of this Church, but of most African American churches across the country, as his audience would know. The audience understands that the Reverend's words have ignited a powerful response among the listeners. The description of voices carrying "up to the rafters like a forceful wind" metaphorically captures the intensity and sweeping effect of the Reverend's message.

Obama's recounting of this moment highlights the profound influence of Reverend Wright and the vibrant community spirit at Trinity Church. By emphasising the change with *began*, Obama accentuates the transformative power of faith and communal worship in this church.

Thus, the use of *began* as a narrative device to vividly portray the dynamic atmosphere and emotional impact of Reverend Wright's sermons. Obama shares his spiritual journey and bears witness to the Church's influence on his religious commitment and activism.

In his A More Perfect Union speech, Obama refers to his book *Dreams from my Father*, in which he had vividly recounted his profound experience at Trinity Church, where he describes an uplifting moment of communal worship. Obama states,

> "In my first book, *Dreams from my Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity, and it goes as follows: People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters. And in that single note -- hope -- I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories of survival and freedom and hope became our stories, my story. The blood that spilled was our blood; the tears our tears; until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and

> into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black. In chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a meaning to reclaim memories that we didn't need to feel shame about -- memories that all people might study and cherish and with which we could *start* (emphasis added) to rebuild. That has been my experience at Trinity" (Obama, 2008, March 18).

Even though I have discussed the first utterance in the analysis above, I have included it here because it provides the complete textual background of the use of the trigger *start* at the end of the present excerpt.

Moreover, when Obama uses *start* in the context of reclaiming memories and giving them meaning, the audience knows that he is referring to the African American experience of religion that sustained them through slavery and its aftermath up to the present. The audience knows the "songs and stories" Obama is referring to since they are sung and told in churches and communities of colour to this day. The past is embraced, studied, and valued universally, but it is never considered shameful. Rather, the past is the heritage that is integral to the historical consciousness of the African American identity surviving in "songs and stories," a source of strength and inspiration.

Thus, the audience perceives Obama's use of *began* and *start* as pointing to the moments in his narrative, marking the intersection of faith, community, and cultural heritage. These verbs underscore the fact that shared experiences forge connections across generations and cultures.

The issue of religious enriching the Black people's struggle for equality also appear in his eulogy to Reverend Clementa Pinckney. He reflects on the historical significance of the church. He states,

> "When there were laws banning all-black church gatherings, services happened here anyway, in defiance of unjust laws. When there was a righteous movement to dismantle Jim Crow, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached from its pulpit, and marches *began* (emphasis added) from its steps. A sacred place, this church. Not just for blacks, not just for Christians, but for every American who cares about the steady expansion -- (applause) -- of human rights and human dignity in this country; a foundation

stone for liberty and justice for all. That's what the church meant. (Applause)." (Obama, 2015, June 26)

This excerpt recounts the historical significance of the Church where the Reverend Clementa Pinckney preached. Obama refers to the time when "all-black church gatherings" were banned. He also recalls that Martin Luther King Jr. preached at this Church during the Jim Crow era. This was also the Church from where people marched protesting the "unjust laws" of the same period. This presupposition about the Church's role in the civil rights movement is indicated by the verb *began*.

For the audience, *began* signifies the resolve to courageously respond to injustice. It portrays the Church not just as a place of worship, but as a symbol of defiance against discriminatory laws and a catalyst for social change. The applause that follows underscores the audience's recognition of the church's role in advancing human rights and dignity and dismantling racial and religious boundaries.

Moreover, Obama's description of the church as "a sacred place, not just for blacks, not just for Christians, but for every American," would signify that he considers the defiance of the Church against the injustice of Jim Crow laws as showing how "human rights and human dignity," and "liberty and justice" can be won for everyone.

Each of the excerpts on religion explores the world of Obama's faith, the role of the Black Church, and the broader implications of religious freedom and heritage. It begins with his personal connection to the Reverend Jeremiah Wright and the uplifting experience of worship at Trinity Church, which he recounts as a spiritual awakening that merged personal faith with the collective history of African Americans. In *A More Perfect Union,* Obama expands this world by connecting the stories and songs of Black Church traditions to the larger narrative of African American survival, resilience, and identity. Finally, in his eulogy for Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Obama places the church as both a sacred space and a symbol of defiance against racial and religious injustice, highlighting its role in the Civil Rights Movement. Across these worlds, Obama presupposes and communicates the powerful role of religion in fostering community, advancing human dignity, and preserving cultural heritage, uniting past struggles with present faith and future hope.

About Gun Violence

Gun violence has been the bane of life in America. No less than 13 incidents of mass killings occurred during Obama's Presidency, one of which was in Tucson, Arizona (CNN Editorial Research, 2023).

In his Tucson Memorial Service Speech, he states,

> "They believed -- they believed, and I believe that we can be better. Those who died here, those who saved life here –- they help me believe. We may not be able to stop all evil in the world, but I *know* (highlight added) that how we treat one another, that's entirely up to us (Applause)." (Obama, 2011, January 12)

Shortly before these utterances, President Obama used the phrase "be better." He shows the ways in which Americans can be better, "be better" in their private lives as friends, neighbours, co-workers and parents and engage in "a more civil and honest public discourse." It is likely that Obama is referring to the heated positions that Americans adopt on any reform in gun policy. The pronoun 'they' refers to John Roll and Gabby Giffords. So, Obama believes with them that we can be civil to one another and engage in public discourse with equal civility on gun violence. Obama acknowledges the existence of "evil in the world" and that it keeps going on, one example of which is gun violence in the country. For this reason, Obama thinks that we cannot eradicate evil. However, he is personally convinced that how people treat one another is within their control. He does not explicitly lay out how this can happen. The audience understands that Obama is urging them to choose to treat one another better, a choice they have to make individually, which they indicate by applauding him. The factive verb *know* in Obama's speech serves to emphasise his unwavering faith in humanity's capacity to choose compassion over hostility, even in the face of adversity. By using *know*, Obama invites the audience to share in his certainty and to embrace their role in shaping a nation that would empathise with one another and be respectful.

In the context of politics and policy, gun violence and police reforms highlight the critical issues of inequality and justice in America. Obama in his 2016 DNC says:

> "Hillary knows we can work through racial divides in this country when we *realize* (emphasis added) the worry black

> parents feel when their son leaves the house isn't no different than what a brave cop's family feels when he puts on the blue and goes to work; that we can honor police and treat every community fairly. (Applause) We can do that." (Obama, 2016, July 27)

In this extract Obama presupposes and emphasises the anxieties of black parents and a cop's family, their emotional experience of facing a constant threat being just the same. Obama's use of *realize* requires of them to acknowledge this obvious fact of life.

Additionally, the presupposition that "we can honor police and treat every community fairly" underscores a belief in the compatibility of respect for law enforcement with the pursuit of justice and equality, because Obama recognises that the police are treated with deep suspicion. The audience note his acknowledgment of the possibility of obtaining fair treatment in a community, while also honouring the role of the police. The audience understand the necessity of working through racial divides by acknowledging that fears and anxieties are the common lot of humankind, irrespective of colour. Therefore, it is necessary to strive for a balanced approach to policy-making that addresses both respect for law enforcement and justice for all communities.

Obama here is emphasising that Hillary Clinton understands that racial divides in the country can be addressed when people comprehend the concerns and fears experienced by both black parents and families of police officers. By employing *realize*, Obama prompts the audience to engage themselves with these fears, encourages them to recognise that despite different backgrounds and experiences, human emotions and concerns are the same for everybody. This verb choice implies that Obama believes in the audience's capacity for empathy and rational thought, urging them to bridge divides by acknowledging these commonalities. Moreover, Obama's use of *realize* supports his commitment to bridge the divides between people. He suggests that through mutual understanding, respect, and empathy, societal divisions can be addressed constructively and reduced, and eventually eradicated. This approach aligns with his broader message of fostering a just and compassionate society where all communities are treated fairly. Thus, Obama's use of *realize* in this context challenges the audience to reflect on their own perspectives and biases and he

invites the audience to move forward to addressing racial divides in their communities. By presenting justice and police reform as a reachable goal, Obama inspires the audience to participate in creating a more harmonious and inclusive America.

The excerpts on gun violence deal with the intersecting worlds of human empathy, public discourse, and gun reform. In the Tucson Memorial Service speech, Obama focuses on the personal world of relationships, urging Americans to treat each other with compassion and civility, even amid the pervasive presence of "evil," represented by gun violence. He highlights the power of individual choices in shaping a more empathetic and humane society. In the 2016 DNC speech, Obama expands this world to address the broader societal implications of violence, emphasising the shared anxieties of Black parents and police officers' families. He presupposes that these common fears can be a foundation for bridging racial divides and building mutual understanding. Across these worlds, Obama communicates his belief in humanity's capacity for empathy and rationality, urging his audience to engage in meaningful dialogue and work collectively towards a fairer, safer society.

About International Affairs

Obama engages the international community with his pronouncements on international affairs and American diplomacy. His inaugural address presents his views on America's role on the global stage by reaffirming her global leadership. He declares,

> "And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, *know* (emphasis added) that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more (Applause)." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

Obama presupposes that these propositions are widely accepted. The use of *know* presupposes that the audience, including governments and people around the world already acknowledge and accept America's commitment to friendship and support for global peace and dignity. Obama declares that his Presidency will reassert American leadership as it had in the past.

Continuing his address to governments, Obama challenges global leaders who may be inclined towards conflict or blame-shifting by stating, “To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ills on the West, *know* (emphasis added) that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. (Applause).”

Obama does not name “those leaders,” but his audience gathered on the National Mall and extending to the Lincoln Memorial and those watching the inauguration across the nation and the world will have known who he was likely referring to, mostly leaders of authoritarian countries. He was also affirming what is generally known about authoritarian leaders, that they “destroy.” They will be judged harshly, he asserts, by their own future generations.

In this statement the audience note that Obama emphasizes the fact of people judging their leaders about their governance. By using *know* in this context, Obama effectively communicates to global leaders that this principle of accountability, which is universally recognized, is not negotiable. He challenges these leaders to prioritize nation-building and make positive contributions to society, instead of taking divisive actions or scapegoating.

This use of *know* implies that the audience, particularly the leaders being addressed, should recognize and accept this as a fact of international affairs. The assumption is that for people to judge their leaders is an inevitable and inherent aspect of governance. By presenting this idea as an accepted fact, Obama emphasizes the importance of constructive leadership and accountability. He implicitly challenges leaders to focus on positive contributions, rather than engaging in conflict or deflecting blame. This presupposition underscores the message that true leadership is measured by building and improving society, reinforcing the values of responsibility and constructive action on the global stage. Moreover, Obama’s use of *know* implies a shared understanding among the audience that leadership is fundamentally about responsibility and constructive impact. This approach encourages authoritarian leaders to consider the long-term implications of their actions on their societies and reinforces the importance of fostering stability and progress through effective governance.

In another part of Obama’s inaugural address, he sends a clear message of caution to global leaders with his statement:

> "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, *know* (emphasis added) that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist. (Applause)." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

The audience understands Obama's words as a caution to leaders who maintain power through "corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent." His starting point is that such methods are morally wrong and historically condemned. His audience knows for a fact that the judgement of history is inevitable and that ethical governance is fundamental to enduring leadership. By using *know* in this context, Obama effectively communicates to these leaders that their actions have placed them on a path that history will judge harshly. He also offers a hand of friendship if they choose to embrace transparency and justice.

Obama's most extensive statement on international affairs and war and conflict is contained in his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance speech. He had assumed charge as President and Commander-in-Chief barely eleven months before he delivered this speech, when US involvement in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan was at its highest level.

First, he takes up "the concept of a 'just war'." He recognises that

> "over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war. The concept of a "just war" emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence. Of course, we *know* (emphasis added) that for most of history, this concept of "just war" was rarely observed. The capacity of human beings to think up new ways to kill one another proved inexhaustible, as did our capacity to exempt from mercy those who look different or pray to a different God." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

By mentioning the concept of "just war," Obama distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate uses of force, a widely accepted perspective in

international law on the necessity of war, which his audience who, he assumes, are informed individuals. They would also know that the idea of a "just war" was adhered to in practice. In this context, the factive verb *know* presupposes the truth of the statement "for most of history, this concept of 'just war' was rarely observed." Furthermore, the verb *know* allows President Obama to build a logical argument. By stating "we know" in this context, he sets the stage for discussing the challenges of regulating war and promoting peace. The audience comprehend this as a foundation for his argument that the tendency of humankind to invent new ways of warfare and mistreat people racially and culturally was boundless.

The factive verb *know* also adds a degree of certainty to the shared knowledge, the common ground between Obama and the audience, allowing him to build a persuasive argument about the need for continued efforts to regulate war and promote peace.

He then addresses the complex nature of international relations, the inevitability of violent conflict and the necessary use of force. The audience perceives his words as a realistic acknowledgment of the inevitability of global conflict. He says,

> "We must *begin* (emphasis added) by acknowledging the hard truth: We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations -- acting individually or in concert -- will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

The change of state verb *begin* signals the starting point of his argument, viz. the acknowledgment about "the hard truth" about conflicts. By using *begin*, Obama suggests that it is now time to openly confront and accept the enduring nature of violent conflict despite all the effort put in to bring about peace in the world. It would have prompted a reflection among his audience about the conventional views on international relations and the compelling need to sometimes resort to force in the pursuit of upholding democracy and human rights. Moreover, Obama's use of *begin* signals to the audience that acknowledging global security challenges is a crucial first step towards developing effective strategies for resolving conflict and building peace. By starting his speech with this acknowledgement, Obama aims to highlights the

ethical dilemmas and moral responsibilities associated with decisions to use force.

Later in the Nobel Prize Acceptance speech, Obama addresses military action and America's role as a superpower. Obama declares,

> "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism -- it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason.
>
> I raise this point, I *begin* (emphasis added) with this point because in many countries there is a deep ambivalence about military action today, no matter what the cause. And at times, this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America, the world's sole military superpower." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

Obama's predominantly European audience at this speech must have understood his words to signify a concerted effort to address sensitive global attitudes towards America's military action and role as a superpower. The use of *begin* signals the starting point of the argument defending American foreign policy. By making this statement, Obama confronts the existing views surrounding American military interventions past and present. It invites his audience to consider the historical and ethical dimensions of using force in international relations, while also acknowledging the widespread scepticism towards America's role as a military superpower.

Still later in the same speech Obama emphasises the importance of adhering to international treaties regarding the use of force. Obama declares,

> "To *begin* (emphasis added) with, I believe that all nations -
>
> - strong and weak alike -- must adhere to standards that govern the use of force. I -- like any head of state -- reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend my nation. Nevertheless, I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don't" (Obama, 2009, December 10).

Obama's audience perceives his words as a strategic and principled stance on international treaties regarding the use of force, most prominently, the Geneva Conventions (Shaw, 2024).

In the above excerpt, the verb *begin*, though a change of state verb initiates his argument. By starting with this assertion, Obama indicates his commitment to continue his argument that the use of force is necessary. His audience understands this approach as emphasising that a nation sometimes has to choose to go to war, regardless of its strength or size, or its superpower status. By choosing to begin with this point, Obama endorses his belief in the importance of international standards to regulate the use of force. It invites the audience to consider the ethical and practical implications of unilateral actions versus adherence to agreed-upon norms. By articulating that adherence to these standards strengthens nations while isolating those who disregard them, Obama emphasizes the benefits of a treaty-based international order.

Still in a later part of the speech, Obama states the following on the conditions that generate animosity and distrust between peoples and nations.

> "I believe we know that peace is unstable where citizens are denied the right to speak freely or worship as they please; choose their own leaders or assemble without fear. Pent-up grievances fester, and the suppression of tribal and religious identity can lead to violence. We also *know* (emphasis added) that the opposite is true. Only when Europe became free did it finally find peace. America has never fought a war against a democracy, and our closest friends are governments that protect the rights of their citizens. No matter how callously defined, neither America's interests -- nor the world's -- are served by the denial of human aspirations." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In this part of the acceptance speech, Obama lays down the conditions for lasting peace. Peace is stable, he believes, when citizens are free, when they have the right "to speak freely," "worship as they please," "choose their own leaders," "assemble without fear," grievances are not allowed fester, and tribal and religious identity are recognised. He believes that these conditions define a democracy. Europe became free when these conditions became true and the continent finally found peace. He observes that America did not need to go to war with a democratic country. In fact, democratic countries have been America's closest allies.

Obama invites the audience to reflect on well-documented historical facts, such as peace becoming real following the establishment of freedom throughout Europe. He suggests that these examples serve as compelling evidence that societies in which human rights are respected tend to be more stable and less prone to conflict. This verb choice underscores Obama's belief that the audience is informed about these historical contexts and shares his perspective on the importance of protecting human aspirations.

Moreover, Obama's use of *know* positions his statements not merely as personal beliefs, but as universally acknowledged truths supported by historical evidence. This approach aims to persuade the audience of the critical link between safeguarding human rights and achieving global peace.

In the same speech Obama adds about human rights,

> "Let me also say this: The promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone. At times, it must be coupled with painstaking diplomacy. I *know* (emphasis added) that engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation. But I also *know* (emphasis added) that sanctions without outreach -- condemnation without discussion -- can carry forward only a crippling status quo. No repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

Obama focuses in this part of the speech on the promotion of human rights as a goal of international diplomacy, particularly in relations with authoritarian states, in which rights are denied. President Obama presents these statements as something he believes to be true or knows to be true. In the context of the speech, the audience note Obama's assertion of truths grounded in his experience and understanding of diplomatic realities. When Obama states, "I know that engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation," and "sanctions without outreach... can carry forward only a crippling status quo," he intends his audience to accept these presuppositions.

By employing the factive verb *know*, Obama positions himself as someone with insights into international relations and diplomacy. He suggests that his statements are not mere opinions, but conclusions drawn from practical

experience and historical examples. This approach invites the audience to trust his judgment and expertise on the entanglements that surround the promotion of human rights in challenging geopolitical contexts.

Moreover, Obama's use of *know* reinforces the meticulous approach required in international diplomacy. He acknowledges the counter productiveness of condemning repressive regimes outright, but argues that such actions may not always lead to constructive outcomes. By stating *I know* Obama emphasises the need for balanced strategies that combine moral clarity with diplomatic engagement to effect meaningful change.

The excerpts on international affairs from his 2009 Inaugural Address and the Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance speech explore the world of American leadership, global diplomacy, and the principles of justice and peace. In his 2009 Inaugural Address, Obama asserts America's commitment to being a friend to all nations, positioning the U.S. as a leader in establishing peace and dignity across the globe. He challenges authoritarian leaders, emphasizing the inevitability of judgment on their governance, particularly if it is authoritarian and repressive, and invites them to embrace constructive leadership. The Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance speech expands on this world by confronting the realities of war and the ethical complexities of using force, while calling for adherence to international norms. Obama's use of "know" throughout these speeches emphasises the worlds of shared global truths, such as the importance of human rights, peaceful diplomacy, and accountability.

Conclusion

Thus far I have been identifying the presuppositions in excerpts from the ten speeches selected for study because they are the only ones that contain tokens of presupposition triggers. I referred earlier in this chapter to Karttunen's list of triggers reproduced in Levinson (1983). A search for these triggers in Obama's speeches turned up only four of them – the factive verbs *know* and *realize*, and the change of state verbs *begin* and *start.* The reader will have noted that I did not mention the commonest class of triggers in any text, including Obama's speeches and the excerpts I have been discussing, viz. definite expressions. The reason why I have not chosen not to comment on them is because it is a truism, "there exists x," where x is a definite expression. They are naturally invoked whenever presuppositions are identified.

Factive verbs, by and large encode elements in a common ground that are generally considered to be true of the real world. Obama asserts and his audience understand that racism exists, that the Selma march has not delivered all the civil rights (Selma Speech), that American families can live in safety (DNC 2004), that polarization has led to divisions and disagreements between politicians (Yes, We Can), that discriminatory budgeting of resources for health, welfare and education is the current norm (A More Perfect Union), that governments under any presidency cannot provide every policy outcome the electorate desires (2008 Victory Speech), that America is built on its "patchwork heritage" and diversity (2009 Inaugural Address), and that the concept of "just war" is rarely practiced (Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech).

Change of state verbs on the other hand, encapsulate Obama's vision for America and his actions to make them real. Obama sees America that is more equal and just, which in and by itself, his audience would have absorbed with fervour and conviction. His being elected for two terms is a testament to this fact. Obama's campaign culminates in marks the beginning of a vision of "remaking" of America (2008 Victory Speech). He sees a vision of participatory democracy in which the people add to what he would do as president (Yes, We Can! speech). He sees in America that moves towards "perfection" by giving more inclusive healthcare, jobs and education (A More Perfect Union).

The focus on factivity and change of state appear to be rhetorically significant because it draws the audience attention to factual propositions and change, both of which contribute to persuasion, which is the singular goal of political speeches.

In conclusion, the theory supports the assumption that presuppositions inhere in utterances. A public speaker presupposes them, and his audience-hearers infer them, and this I assert is an essential part of what it means to hold a colloquy between a speaker-orator and a hearer-audience.

I re-examine these excerpts in the following chapter to identify what his audiences could infer about the more than what Obama has said about his vision and hope for America.

Chapter 5: A vision for the now and then

The proper place to background the theory and analysis that follow in this chapter is with Grice's theory of meaning. According to Grice, non-natural meaning refers to meaning that is not derived from the conventional meaning of words, but rather from the context in which they are used. This meaning is based on the use of language and the speaker's intentions. Grice's concept of non-natural meaning was influenced by his rejection of the view that meaning can be defined purely in terms of the association of words with objects in the world. Grice believed that meaning involves more than a mere mapping between words and objects, and that context and speaker's intentions are crucial to understanding meaning.

Grice (1957) defined two types of meaning: natural meaning (**meaning$_N$**) and non-natural meaning (**meaning$_{NN}$**). Natural meaning refers to the meaning that is inherent in the external world, such as the meaning of words or objects. Non-natural meaning, on the other hand, refers to the meaning that is conveyed by speakers through their use of language.

Grice's theory of non-natural meaning, also represented as meaning$_{NN}$, emphasizes the conceptual relation between natural meaning and non-natural meaning. According to Grice (1957) , in the case of meaning$_N$, "if an utterance U states the proposition *p*, then *p* entails *p*, indicating that the natural meaning of an utterance is equivalent to its semantic content." On the other hand, Grice's analysis of meaning$_{NN}$ is formally represented as

'A meant$_{NN}$ something by x' is roughly equivalent to 'A uttered x with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention' (Grice 1969, 385). In a later paper, he gives an expanded definition of the utterer's meaning in the following way:

(5.1) U meant something by uttering x' is true iff [if and only if], for some audience A, U uttered x intending:

1. A to produce a particular response *r*
2. A to think (recognize) that U intends (1)
3. A to fulfil (1) based on his fulfilment of (2).

These definitions suggest that Grice accounts for communication in terms of "intentions and inferences," that is an intention to inform the addressee is

fulfilled simply by the recognition of this intention by the addressee (Haugh and Jaszczolt, 2012). This concept of meaning$_{NN}$ forms the basis of Grice's theory of conversational behaviour in terms of the construct of the conversational implicature. That is to say, implicatures are meanings the speaker intends the addressee to know and which the addressee recovers. The analysis of Barack Obama's speeches that follows in this chapter is based on the well-attested fact that his utterances carry the message he intends his audience to understand, since the intention in Grice's paper on meaning$_{NN}$ can be described as the intention to communicate certain content to the audience. It is therefore appropriate to call this **communicative intention**. Haugh and Jaszczolt (2012) describe 4 cases of the connection between addresser's intended meanings and the non-natural meaning that the addressee recovers, which are as follows.

Case 1: Speaker-intended implicature

This is the situation in which the hearer infers the implicature the speaker intended.

Case 2: Reader-determined implicature

In literary contexts, such as poetry, the writer may deliberately leave the interpretation open, allowing the reader to infer multiple implicatures, which could include some of the writer's intended meanings (Clark, 1997; Jaszczolt, 1999, p. 85).

Case 3: Unintended implicature

Sometimes, the speaker may imply something contrary to their intentions, and the hearer infers this unintended meaning, as discussed by Cummings (2005, pp. 20-21) and Haugh (2008b).

Case 4: Open implicature

Speakers leave meaning open and the hearers actively determine meaning based on the context (Clark, 1997).

I have looked at implicatures in Obama's speeches that arise out of the first case mentioned above. Specifically, I closely examine the complements of the trigger verbs discussed in the previous chapter and as located in the textual context in which they occur. Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principle and its maxims codify the means by which hearer/audience infer the intentions of the speaker/orator.

Grice in his 1967 William James Lecture "Logic and Conversation," which was published in 1975, argued that non-natural meaning is conveyed through a language phenomenon he named **implicature**. He explains it in this way.

> "Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet* (emphasis added). At this point, A might well inquire what B was implying, what he was suggesting, or even what he meant by saying that C had not yet been to prison. The answer might be *any one of such things* (emphasis added) as *that C is the sort of person likely to yield to the temptation provided by his occupation, that C's colleagues are really very unpleasant and treacherous people, and so forth* (emphasis added). It might, of course, be quite unnecessary for A to make such an inquiry of B, the answer to it being, in the context, clear in advance. It is clear that whatever B implied, suggested, meant in this example, is distinct from what B said, which simply was that C had not be prison yet." (Grice, p. 43)

The "any one of such things" that A understands to be what B meant, namely, the clauses that are underscored in the excerpt above, when he said that C has not yet been to prison, are examples of implicatures. Grice postulates that these implicatures arise out of a communicative cooperation between interlocutors in a conversation. He codified this collaboration in the Cooperative Principle.

(5.2) **The Cooperative Principle**

> "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice, 1975, p. 45)."

The manner in which a speaker is co-operative is codified in a set of principles that Grice believes governs the communication between a speaker and hearer(s). He refers to them as **Maxims** and they are reproduced below in their original formulation.

(5.3) " Maxim of Quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative, as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relation

Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly" (Grice, 1975, pp. 45-47).

The maxims of Quantity and Quality focus on the informativeness and truthfulness of the information provided by a speaker. On the other hand, maxims of Relation and Manner relate to how the information is presented. These apply both to an individual utterance and longer stretches of dialogue. Maxims of Quantity and Quality are primarily concerned with the information a speaker provides, ensuring relevance and truthfulness in the speaker's utterances. These apply more to individual statements or particular pieces of information within a conversation.

Maxims of Relation and Manner are more concerned with the coherence, context, and organisation of information. They operate not only within individual statements but also across a broader conversation or a long stretch of utterances. They focus on how the speech or conversation as a whole is structured, how relevant it is to the topic at hand, and the clarity and style of communication.

Thus, I see that the maxims are interconnected and collectively contribute to effective communication, ensuring the clarity, relevance, and

truthfulness of information, both within individual statements and across a series of utterances or a longer conversation.

In an idealised situation speakers can ensure that their contributions to the conversation are effective and efficient by following the maxims, by working together with the listener to achieve the goals of the conversation which is stated in (5.4.1). The other possibilities a speaker may adopt are stated in (5.4.2)-(5.4.4).

(5.4) 1. The speaker may observe the maxims.
2. The speaker may opt out of a maxim.
3. The speaker may flout a maxim.
4. The speaker may violate a maxim.

Observing the maxims is the default position. The implicature triggered when speakers observe maxims are conventionally referred to as a **standard conversational implicature**, often represented by conversational **implicature$_0$**. The second possibility of opting out of a maxim typically happens when the speaker uses a phrase to qualify their utterance. A hedge phrase like "I'm not certain I'm right" would signal to an addressee that the speaker is unsure of the truthfulness of their utterance, which the maxim of Quality requires. Thirdly, a speaker flouts a maxim when they intentionally say something false or uninformative, or irrelevant, causing the addressee to believe that the speaker intends the addressee to understand something different from what has been said. Implicature triggered by flouting a maxim is called **conversational implicature**, but for the sake of simplicity, I refer to them as **implicature**. Finally, a speaker quietly violates a maxim, without making the addressee aware that he is doing so, by ignoring the cooperative principle and the maxims and, as a result, the utterance in question leads the addressee to draw an incorrect or misleading inference.

Types of Implicature

Conversational implicatures are of two types according to Grice (1975). **Generalized conversational implicatures** are inferred without referring to the context of utterances. The utterance (5.5.1) generates the inference in (5.5.2).

(5.5) 1. Some of the students completed the assignment.
2. Not all the students completed the assignment.

(5.5.1) does not make explicit the context in which it is uttered, despite which, the addressee understands that the speaker intended to convey the fact that not all the students completed the assignment. **Particularized conversational**

implicatures are understood within the context of an utterance, as in the exchange taken from Grice's lecture (51).

(5.6) A: I've run out of petrol.

B: There's a garage just round the corner.

+> A can get petrol at the garage. (+> = implicates)

From B's reply, A infers the implicature that she can obtain petrol at the garage just round the corner. A would reason that B is being cooperative and knows that there is a garage round the corner and that it is open.

Grice discusses several examples of implicature in his paper "Logic and Conversation." He proposed that when a speaker is cooperative with the hearer, the hearer can infer implicatures from the speaker's utterances. Grice hypothesis the cognitive reasoning that lead to implicature, a process that he called **Calculability**. They can be calculated or inferred by the listener employing the Cooperative principle and the maxims that constitute it. Grice (1975) describes implicature calculability in this manner:

(5.7) "A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that *p* has implicated that q, may be said to have conversationally implicated that *q*, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, q is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say p (or doing so in those terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required."

Consider the exchange in (5.8)

(5.8) A: I'd like to buy this bunch of flowers, but I don't have Rs. 500.

B: I have Rs. 500.

+> B has at least Rs. 500.

Applying Grice's schema to this exchange would yield a calculation as given in (5.9) from the point of view of the hearer.

(5.9) a. B has said that *p*, where *p* is *I have Rs. 500.*

b. There is no reason for me to think that B is not being cooperative and not observing the maxims of conversation.

c. In saying that *p*, B is being informative to the extent as is required in this situation and not being more informative than necessary (maxim of Quantity).

d. In saying that *p*, B must think that *q*, where *q* is *B has at least Rs. 500.*

e. B has not in any way done anything to stop me from thinking *q*.

f. Therefore, B intends me to think *q*, and so, by saying that *p* implicates *q*.

Properties of Conversational Implicature (CI)

Conversational implicatures have several distinctive properties. The first one is the property of **defeasibility** or **cancellability**. Conversational implicature can be cancelled or overridden by certain linguistic or non-linguistic contexts, such as semantic entailments, background assumptions, or other conversational implicatures. If the exchange in (5.6) were to proceed as in (5.10), the implicature in the former will not be obtained.

(5.10) A (to passer by): I've run out of petrol.

B: Oh! There's a garage just round the corner, but it is closed.

In this case, the linguistic context *but it is closed* cancels the implicature in the main clause of the utterance that A can get petrol at the garage. Defeasibility is considered to be the most reliable test of implicature.

Conversational implicatures are part of the semantics of an utterance and not its linguistic form. Thus, conversational implicature exhibit **non-detachability**.

(5.11) A: How's the class treating the new teacher?

B: Enjoying her, for now.

A's question makes it apparent that the class has a reputation of being difficult with their teachers. In this context, B's reply indicates the implicature that the class accepts the teacher, but might begin to be rebellious in future. The same implicature can be inferred if B were to say any of the following utterances.

(5.12) B: Very quiet, right now. OR They seem very happy at the moment.

While the form of the three alternatives is different, they give rise to the same implicature, because of the similarity of their semantic information, rather than

their linguistic structures.

While cancellability and non-detachability are generally true of conversational implicatures, there are notable exceptions. Implicatures arising from irony or metaphor are not easily cancellable; for example, saying "The weather is lovely" ironically to mean bad weather cannot be easily cancelled by adding "No, I'm just kidding, it's actually lovely weather." Similarly, implicatures related to the manner of speaking, such as being obscure, ambiguous, or not brief, are more detachable; for instance, the implicature that "Miss X produced a series of sounds..." means her performance was defective can be detached by rephrasing it in a clearer way. Additionally, some generalized conversational implicatures are less cancellable; the implicature that "X is meeting a woman this evening" means someone other than his wife is hard to cancel without sounding odd. Implicatures from idiomatic expressions are also not easily cancellable; for example, saying "It's raining cats and dogs" implicates heavy rain, and this cannot be easily cancelled by adding "but it's not raining heavily." In summary, while cancellability and non-detachability generally apply to conversational implicatures, exceptions exist involving irony, metaphor, manner implicatures, some generalized implicatures, and implicatures from idioms, illustrating that the properties of implicatures can vary depending on the specific type and context.

Grice developed this conceptual framework and applied it to unitary utterances in imagined conversations. In these idealised situations, maxims come together and generate implicatures. However, the framework needs careful examination in the case of a political speech.

In a political speech, a candidate might say,

(5.13) My opponent's policies will ruin the country.

This statement is an opinion, rather than a verifiable fact. It does not adhere to the maxim of Quality, which is based on factual information, but is instead expresses of the speaker's viewpoint.

Let us consider another election related utterance-- (5.14) This is the most important election of our lifetime. This statement lacks quantifiable or verifiable evidence; it is an opinion or assertion about the significance of the election. It emphasises a subjective perspective, rather than adhering to the maxim of Quantity based on data.

In political speeches, facts are sometimes blurred and, opinions and falsehoods are presented as facts to sway opinion or persuade the audience. Consequently, statements might not always strictly follow the maxims of Quality and Quantity, because the aim is to persuade, or establish a specific narrative, rather than to aptly present facts.

On the other hand, the maxims of Relevance and Manner apply significantly in political speeches, and they can often involve opinions. The examples below show how these maxims work in a political speech.

When a political figure says,

(5.15) We need change because the current system is corrupt.

the speakers' statement is relevant in the context of discussing the need for change, but the notion that the system is 'corrupt' is subjective, and open to interpretation.

Finally, I look at an example of maxim of Manner in the following utterance.

(5.16) My opponent's policies are cantankerous, dyspeptic and curmudgeonly.

This statement contains words that most people would not know, and consequently they would be obscure.

The argument so far has focused on statements of opinions in a political speech. However, an orator would refer to entities in his speeches. Obama refers to his family, to other persons, to events, past and present, by using referring expressions. He also names classes of entities. Each of these entities have existed or exist at the moment of speaking. The predicate structures that follow these expressions state opinions about them that are unverifiable, just as in the examples in (5.13) – (5.16). Consider what Obama says about children in "inner city neighborhoods" and their education, "that [these] children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations" (Obama, 2004, July 27). Obama makes children's achievements conditional on parents motivating them, which is only one of the possible ways to get them to achieve more. In another instance, Obama expresses his opinion on slavery by referring to the American Constitution "that promised its people liberty and justice, and a union that could

be and should be perfected over time" (Obama, 2008, March 18). This constitutes Obama's interpretation of the Constitution in the context of American history that others may disagree with.

At the same time, what Obama says about the education of Afro-American children and the Constitution represents his selection from innumerable predicates on these issues. If they are selections, then their choice would have been perhaps determined by their relevance in a speech. Assertions in a political speech are relevant when they support its objective. This can be shown to be true by observing that the goal of a speech constrains the details it presents. For instance, he refers to his family and his ancestors in glowing terms in several of his speeches, in DNC 2004 and 2008 Election Victory speech. However, he does not mention his parents' divorce, his stepfather, and the gulf between his father and him (Obama 2004). Obama omits these details because they do not support the idea of a responsible ideal family, which is the thrust of his references to his immediate and extended family, as well as his ancestors.

I conclude that Obama's utterances express contextually relevant states or conditions of the referring or nominal expressions that are relevant in the context of his speech. This brief examination of the dynamics of a political speech bring into sharp focus the role of the maxims in it. The discussion justifies a revised version of Grice's maxims, in so far as they apply to the oratory in a political speech. In this version, the maxim of Quantity is vacuous since an audience cannot determine the extent to which a speech is appropriately informative. How much information to mention in a speech depends entirely on the orator. For this reason, the maxim of Quantity or a version of it specific to a political speech is omitted in the revised version below.

(5.17) "Maxim of Quality

Say what is possible, as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).

Maxim of Relation

Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.

3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly" (Grice, pp. 26-27).

This version of the maxims is employed in the analysis that begins below.

Analysis of Conversational Implicatures in Obama's speeches

I identified the recurring themes in Obama's speeches in chapters 3 and 4, using the nomenclature in the Pew Research Center inventory and analysed presuppositions associated with them. In this chapter, I explore the implicatures linked to topics and excerpts in Chapter 4. I reproduce them below for the reader's convenience.

About Family and Relationships

We begin with the passage in which Obama speaks about his family and relationships in DNC 2004.

> "My parents shared not only an improbable love, they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined -- They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. They're both passed away now. And yet, I know that on this night they look down on me with great pride" (Obama, 2004, July 27).

From Obama's narrative about his parents, his audience would have understood first the extraordinary love that they shared. Secondly, he mentions the strong faith his parents had in the possibilities that the United States offers to its citizens. The audience understands that his parents' decision to give him an African name, "Barack," or "blessed," reflects their belief that in "a tolerant America," one's name would not invite discrimination, as it could in another nation. This idea conveys values related to equality and upward mobility. The audience infer that despite Obama's parents not being wealthy, they hoped that he would get a good education. This insight ties to the broader theme of educational opportunities and the belief that in America, financial constraints would not impede one's potential. Lastly, the mention of his parents' passing away evokes a sense of nostalgia and loss, emphasising the theme of familial

relationships. The audience can note Obama's sense of pride and the poignant acknowledgment of his parents' enduring influence on his life.

I now state the implicatures that may be inferred from this excerpt, "+>" indicates that the statement following it is an implicature;

(5.18) *"My parents shared not only an improbable love.*

+> It was an unlikely relationship.

(5.19) *They shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation."*

+> Anybody can succeed in America.

(5.20) *"They would give me an African name.*

+> A person's uncommon name can affect their success.

(5.21) *"They imagined me going to the best schools in the land."*

+> They had high hopes for his education.

(5.22) *"They weren't rich."*

+> Rich people send their children to the best schools.

(5.23) "*In a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential."*

+> Everybody has a fair shot at success.

(5.24) "*On this night they look down on me with great pride."*

+> Obama feels connected with his deceased parents.

These are the potential implicatures Obama's audience could infer. I now examine how the potential implicatures in these utterances can be calculated following the steps of calculability that Grice proposed in his lecture.

In Gricean terms, *p* stands for the main proposition or statement made by the speaker to a hearer. It represents the explicit content of what is being said and convey its "at-issue" meaning. Given *p*, *q* represents an implicature, an unstated meaning that the hearer deduces from what is said in its context. Grice demonstrates that the hearer calculates the implicature through a series of inferential statements. In Grice's rendering of the calculation, the hearer refers to himself as "me." I assume Grice's convention in this matter, (a) that the audience listening to a speech is a homogeneous entity; (b) that the inferential sequence Grice presents to calculate implicature in a conversation between speaker-hearers can be extended to infer the possible implicature the audience could make from an orator's speech, and (c) that implicature follow from the Cooperative Principle and the set of maxims in (5.3). These assumptions

undergird the calculation of the implicatures in Obama's utterances in (5.18) – (5.24), as shown below.

(5.25) a. Obama has said that *p*,

that "his parents shared …an improbable love;"

that "they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation;"

that "they would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed;"

that "they imagined me going to the best schools in the land;"

that they weren't rich;"

that "in a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential;"

that "on this night they look down on me with great pride."

b. There is no reason for me to think that Obama is not being cooperative and not observing the maxims of conversation. Obama appears to be cooperative and is observing the maxims of conversation.

c. In saying that *p*, Obama must think that *q*,

that Obama's parents had an unlikely relationship;

that anybody can succeed in America;

that a person's uncommon name can affect success;

that Obama's parents had high hopes for his education;

that rich people send their children to the best schools;

that everybody has a fair shot at success;

that Obama feels connected with his deceased parents;

d. Obama says nothing to dissuade me to not think that *q*; he does not provide any information or context that would discourage me from thinking about the mentioned aspirations and beliefs of the speaker's parents.

e. Therefore, Obama wants the audience to think that *q*, that Obama's parents had an unlikely relationship; that anybody can succeed in America;

that a person's uncommon name can affect success;

that Obama's parents had high hopes for his education;

that rich people send their children to the best schools;

that everybody has a fair shot at success;

that Obama feels connected with his deceased parents;

I now go on to apply two cancelability tests to confirm that each inference is an implicature (Grice 1975, pp. 44) adding additional premises to the original one to see if these additions would suspend or deny an implicature, or create a non-committal stance regarding the implicature. It is seen that the additional premise cancels the implicature in each of the cases (5.26) – (5.31) below.

(5.26) *p: "My parents shared an improbable love."*

+> *q*: It was an unlikely relationship.

Cancellability Test I*:* The utterance *p* but not *q*:

My parents shared an improbable love, but not that it wasn't an unlikely relationship.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "but it wasn't an unlikely relationship." It cancels *q*, which asserts that "It was an unlikely relationship." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.25).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

My parents shared an improbable love. I didn't mean to imply*,* that it was an unlikely relationship.

(5.27) *p*: "*They shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation."*

+> *q*: Anybody can succeed in America.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*.

They shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation, but not everybody can succeed in America.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "but not everybody can succeed in America." It cancels *q*, which asserts that "Anybody can succeed in America." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.26).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

They shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. I didn't meant to imply that everybody can succeed in America.

(5.28) "*They would give me an African name."*

+> *q*: A person's uncommon name can affect their success.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*:

They would give me an African name, but names do not matter.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "names do not matter." It cancels *q*, which asserts that "A person's uncommon name can affect their success." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.28).

Cancellability Test II: *p. p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

They would give me an African name. I didn't mean to imply that names matter.

(5.29) "*They imagined me going to the best schools in the land.*

+> *q*: They had high hopes for his education.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*.

They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, but not that he would graduate.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "not that he would graduate" or, "They did not imagine that he would graduate." It cancels *q*, which asserts that "They had high hopes for his education." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.29).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

They imagined me going to the best schools in the land. I didn't mean to imply that he would graduate.

(5.30) "*They* [Obama's parents] *weren't rich."*

+> *q*: They couldn't send their child to the best schools.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*.

They weren't rich, but not that they didn't send their child to the best schools.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "that they didn't send their child to the best schools." It cancels *q*, which asserts that "They couldn't send their child to the best schools." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.30).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

They weren't rich. I didn't mean to imply that they didn't send him to the best schools.

(5.31) "*In a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential*."

+> *q*: Everybody has a fair shot at success.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*.

In a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential, but not that everyone gets a chance.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "that everyone gets a chance."

It cancels *q*, which asserts that "Everybody has a fair shot at success."

Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.31).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

In a generous America, you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. I didn't mean to imply that everyone gets a chance.

(5.32) *"On this night they look down on me with great pride."*

+> *q*: Obama feels connected with his deceased parents.

Cancellability Test I: The utterance *p* but not *q*.

On this night they look down on him with great pride, but not that they actually see him.

In this case, the added premise ⌈not *q*⌉ is "that they actually see him."

It cancels *q*, which asserts that "Obama feels connected with his deceased parents." Therefore, Grice's test confirms *q* in (5.32).

Cancellability Test II: *p* ⌈I didn't mean to imply *q*⌉

On this night they look down on me with great pride. I didn't mean to imply that they actually see him.

Having analysed excerpts (5.25) – (5.32), identified implicatures in them and tested them, I go on to outline the implicatures that may be inferred in utterances on the topic of family and relationships in other speeches, as well as on other topics. Hereon, however, I do not show the calculability of the implicatures that are inferable in the speeches I analyse, nor do I report the outcome of the tests of cancellability on them.

Another occasion when Obama refers to his family is in his 2008 Victory speech; embedding it within the historic context of his election as the first African-American President of the United States. Obama stated,

> "I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of our family and the love of my life, our nation's next First Lady, Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us to the

> White House. And while she's no longer with us, I know my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and know that my debt to them is beyond measure." (Obama, 2008, November 4)

For the audience, Obama's acknowledgment of his wife, Michelle Obama, "as his best friend, the rock of their family, and the love of his life," suggests that her unwavering support and partnership have been crucial to his success. This also highlights her upcoming role as the First Lady, indicating her importance not just in his personal life, but also in his public role. The audience sees a man who values and relies on his spouse deeply, portraying a strong family bond.

When Obama speaks to his daughters, Sasha and Malia, telling them he loves them and promising a new puppy as they move to the White House, the audience perceives a touching and personal moment. This adds a relatable and humanising element to his message, showing that despite the grandeur of his political achievements, his role as a father remains central to his identity.

Obama's recollection of his late grandmother, whom he believes is watching over him, along with the rest of his family who have shaped him, further emphasises his deep connections to his roots. The audience understands that his grandmother's influence and the support of his extended family have profoundly impacted his values and identity. This suggests a continuity of family influence and their pride in his achievements.

Obama's expression of a profound sense of loss of his deceased family members and his gratitude to them convey to the audience that he feels a significant debt to them. The recognition that their support and sacrifices have been instrumental in his journey resonates with the audience, who can empathise with his feelings of loss and indebtedness. The audience perceives a leader who values his family and is deeply aware of the contributions of his loved ones to his success.

In a reflective moment in his 2016 Democratic National Convention speech, Obama shares memories of his Kansas grandparents and the lessons they imparted to him during his upbringing and the family history of migration to the United States.

> "And it's got me thinking about the story I told you 12 years ago tonight, about my Kansas grandparents and the things they taught me when I was growing up. (Applause.) See, my grandparents, they came from the heartland. Their ancestors began settling there about 200 years ago. I don't know if they have their birth certificates -- (laughter) -- but they were there. (Applause.) They were Scotch-Irish mostly -- farmers, teachers, ranch hands, pharmacists, oil rig workers. Hardy, small town folks. Some were Democrats, but a lot of them -- maybe even most of them -- were Republicans. Party of Lincoln." (Obama, 2016, July 27)

In this excerpt, Obama reminisces about his Kansas grandparents reflecting on the valuable lessons he learned from them. The mention of his ancestry reaching back 200 years highlights a family history deeply rooted in America. The audience will also note these references to his ancestry, mentioning that he did not know whether they had birth certificates, as being a rejoinder to the Birther controversy relating to Obama's birth and citizenship, of which Donald Trump, who became President after him, was the most prominent promoter (Reeve, 2012).

The enumeration of the diverse professions of his ancestors underscores their multifaceted contributions to the small towns in which they lived and worked. His ancestors' varied political affiliations, both as Democrats and Republicans, clearly render to his audience their ideological diversity as being natural. The audience sees these assertions as affirming family ties that political ideologies cannot break.

The three excerpts on family that I have analysed above highlight his views on the family as a unit. The hopes and aspirations that his parents had for him are the same as those that American parents generally have for their children: that they will get a good education, and by doing so advance to a higher station in life. Through the details he mentions of his wife and children and grandmother, he emphasises how significant family support is for personal achievement. Finally, he portrays his grandparents and his ancestors as hardworking people, of different political persuasion and diversity. It is reasonable to say that he presents a vision of what family ought to be in America now and into the future.

About Inequality

I now look at the meaning that Obama intends his audience to pick up on his views about race in America. The very first excerpt is taken from Obama's DNC 2004:

> "Go in -- Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach our kids to learn; they know that parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They know those things." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

In this excerpt from Obama's speech, the audience perceives several key messages regarding the shared responsibility of educating children, particularly in inner-city neighbourhoods. Obama emphasises that government alone cannot ensure children's education; parents and the community must be actively involved. He also highlights the importance of raising children expectations of themselves, reducing distractions like television, and addressing harmful stereotypes that associate academic achievement with racial identity.

For the audience, several potential implicatures can be inferred based on Obama's narrative. Firstly, the community members in inner-city neighbourhoods believe that since government efforts alone are insufficient to educate children effectively, parents in inner-city neighbourhoods must play a bigger role in their education. This is evident from the statement, "government alone can't teach our kids to learn." The audience understands that this perspective emphasises the need for a combined effort involving both government and community.

Secondly, the audience perceives that within these communities, there is an acknowledgement that parents play a crucial role in educating their children. This is conveyed through the phrase, "parents have to teach," indicating that higher degrees of parental involvement are essential for children's educational success.

Additionally, the community's belief in the importance of setting high expectations and reducing distractions is clear. Obama's mention of the need to "turn off the television sets" signals to the audience that minimising such distractions is vital for academic achievement, as well as the need to instill more

discipline in their children. This idea resonates with many who see the detrimental effects of excessive TV watching on children's learning.

Furthermore, Obama addresses the harmful stereotype that associates academic pursuit with "acting white," which the audience perceives as a significant barrier to learning and achievement for black youth. By stating, "eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white," Obama highlights the need to challenge and change these damaging perceptions.

The audience understands that Obama is underscoring the understanding within inner-city communities that effective education requires parental involvement, setting high expectations, minimizing distractions, and challenging stereotypes. By highlighting these community perspectives, Obama advocates for a holistic approach to education that addresses both familial and societal influences on academic success.

Racial and social inequality has had a cascading effect on the health and income, and poverty and wealth of Americans. The Brookings Institution observe that "there are significant racial disparities in access to health coverage and in health outcomes" (Young, 2020). Significantly, more Black and Hispanic Americans were uninsured for medical care than White Americans; infant mortality rates were two to three times higher for black babies than white babies (Young, 2020). Holzman and Jackson (2020) report after examining data on college admission and completion through the twentieth century that "the trends in collegiate inequalities moved in lockstep with the trend in income inequality over the past century." In the twenty first century, "the gap in academic achievement between the poorest and those at the top of the income distribution is larger…" than it was in the 1990s (Dynarski and Michelmore, 2017). Levelling the playing field is a concern that Obama has frequently brought up in his speeches. The passage below from his 2008 'Yes We Can' Speech from Barack Obama's speech highlights the need for making radical changes in America's healthcare and economic opportunities. Obama states,

> "Our new American majority can end the outrage of unaffordable, unavailable health care in our time. We can bring doctors and patients, workers and businesses, Democrats and Republicans together, and we can tell the drug and insurance

> industry that, while they get a seat at the table, they don't get to buy every chair, not this time, not now. Our new majority can end the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs overseas and put a middle-class tax cut in the pockets of working Americans who deserve it. We can stop sending our children to schools with corridors of shame and start putting them on a pathway to success. We can stop talking about how great teachers are and start rewarding them for their greatness by giving them more pay and more support. We can do this with our new majority." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

In this excerpt, Obama highlights the potential of a new American majority to address pressing issues such as unaffordable healthcare, tax breaks for corporations, education disparities, and more. He advocates decisive action in tackling these challenges. The audience likely sees his emphasis on "our new American majority" as an appeal, encouraging everyone to come together regardless of political affiliation. His statement about unaffordable healthcare to those frustrated by the current system and those desiring reforms, offering hope for reform. The mention of bringing together doctors, patients, workers, and businesses underscores a collaborative approach that would have been heartening to those who believe in unity and collective problem-solving.

The assertion that the drug and insurance industries will not dominate the discussion implies a stance against corporate greed, which the audience perceive as promising fairer healthcare policies. His call to end tax breaks for corporations that outsource jobs and to implement middle-class tax cuts appeals directly to working Americans, so as to bring about economic justice.

When Obama talks about ending the shame of underfunded schools and rewarding great teachers with better pay and support, the audience perceives this as a commitment to improving education. His words likely resonate with parents, educators, and anyone concerned about the future of children and the state of the education system.

Overall, the audience sees Obama's speech as a powerful message of hope. The implicated messages communicate a sense of urgency, collaboration, economic fairness, and a commitment to tangibly support teachers and students.

These elements reinforce Obama's vision of a better future through policy reform.

Social and economic disparities violate the principle of equal rights to all citizens, the corrective for which is to seek the full implementation of the American Constitution in spirit and in letter. Obama contemplates this scenario through reform and civic engagement in A More perfect Union speech.

> "Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution -- a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time. And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part -- through protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience, and always at great risk -- to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time. This was one of the tasks we set forth at the *beginning* of this presidential campaign: to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring, and more prosperous America" (Obama, 2008, March 18).

Here, Obama discusses the issue of slavery within the context of the U.S. Constitution. Several implicatures can be inferred from his words. Firstly, by acknowledging the Constitution's ideals of equal citizenship and justice, Obama recognises the founding principles that the nation strives to uphold. However, he also points out that these ideals were not extended to slaves and people of colour, highlighting a stark disparity between the Constitution's promise and realities over time. This suggests that the audience should recognise the historical context and the ongoing need to address these inequalities.

Secondly, Obama suggests that constitutional provisions are insufficient to bring about meaningful change. This implicates the need for concrete actions

like “protests and struggles,” and “civil war and civil disobedience.” The audience understands that true progress requires dedication, resilience, and sacrifice across generations.

By linking the historical struggle for civil rights to the objectives of his presidential campaign, Obama implies an unstoppable journey towards a better America. This connection emphasises the ongoing march for justice, equality, freedom and prosperity. The audience is encouraged to see themselves as part of this ongoing effort in shaping the future of the nation.

The two previous excerpts focus on two ways in which inequality in the United States can be reduced and eventually eliminated, viz. policy reform based on the equal-in-law principle of the American Constitution. A third, but equally critical pre-condition for change requires the people to prioritise concern for the common good. Obama expresses his vision of societal advancement through investment in the health, welfare and education for all children, regardless of their race or background. He asserts:

> “It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams, that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper” (Obama, 2008, March 18).

Obama emphasises the importance of the mutual benefit derived from investing in the well-being and education of all children, regardless of their race or ethnicity. He encourages the audience to recognise that individual dreams and collective progress are not at odds; rather, by supporting the health, welfare and education of children from diverse backgrounds, the entire nation can prosper together. The audience perceives his utterance as an invitation to reject divisive perspectives and embrace inclusivity. When he talks about investing in the health, welfare, and education of black, brown, and white children, the audience understands this as a commitment to equality and creating opportunities for all young people, regardless of racial or ethnic identity. Obama believing in the interconnectedness and shared destiny of Americans, emphasises that investing in youth prioritises social justice, and, in return, benefits the entire nation (American Bar Association, n.d.). He calls Americans to realise that supporting each other’s dreams enhances collective prosperity by

transcending racial and ethnic boundaries.

Several potential implicatures can be inferred from Obama's words. Firstly, the idea that "your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams" implies a critique of divisive policies that are designed to benefit some at the expense of the others. It suggests that cooperative and supportive approaches are more beneficial for society. Secondly, by listing children of different races, Obama implicitly addresses the issues of racial inequality and systemic barriers, promoting the idea that equal opportunities for all leads to a stronger, more prosperous America. Lastly, the statement implies a broader message that societal well-being and economic success are interconnected, reinforcing the notion that investing in the marginalized and underserved populations benefits the entire country.

Obama's vision of reducing inequality in America, as inferred from these excerpts, intertwines the principles of responsibility, systemic reform, and focus on the common good. Regarding education, he reinforces the critical role of families and communities in encouraging learning, challenging stereotypes, and raising aspirations, particularly in "inner-city neighborhoods." This reflects his belief in addressing inequality at its roots—by involving all stakeholders.

From a policy perspective, Obama's advocacy for accessible healthcare, equitable tax policies, and the improvement of underfunded schools aim to ensure equal opportunities for all. His emphasis on collaboration across societal divides, as seen in his appeal to a "new American majority," showcases his dedication to narrowing gaps and bringing inclusivity.

By bringing historical antecedents to contemporary challenges, Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech reminds Americans that the journey toward equality requires sacrifice and civic engagement. He calls for investments in the welfare and education of all children, irrespective of their racial or economic backgrounds, presenting a vision of interconnected progress where individual dreams contribute to a shared destiny.

About civil rights movement

The persistence of rampant racism sparked the civil rights movement (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). As mentioned in chapter 3, it remained an issue about which he expressed his views quite often in his speeches. In his address at the fifteenth commemoration of the march from Selma to Montgomery

demanding voting rights for African-Americans, he says,

> "Of course, a more common mistake is to suggest that Ferguson is an isolated incident; that racism is banished; that the work that drew men and women to Selma is now complete, and that whatever racial tensions remain are a consequence of those seeking to play the "race card" for their own purposes. We don't need the Ferguson report to know that's not true. We just need to open our eyes, and our ears, and our hearts to know that this nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us." (Obama, 2015, March 7)

The audience see Obama strongly pushing back against the notion that racism has been eradicated and recognizes the continuing impact of racial history. In the first utterance, President Obama confronts a common misconception that portrays incidents like Ferguson as an isolated incident, a thing of the past. The audience understands that Obama is challenging this narrative, urging individuals to recognise that the issue of racism still profoundly affects the nation. His statement, "a more common mistake is to suggest that Ferguson is an isolated incident; that racism is banished," implies that acknowledging ongoing racial challenges is essential for change. Metaphors like "the march" and "the race" affirms to his audience that achieving racial justice is a journey that will end in the future only when victory is won. In the second utterance, Obama dismisses the idea that racial tensions are fabricated by those who use the "race card" for their own personal or political gain. In this manner, he forcefully suggests that such beliefs undermine the genuine struggle against racial injustice. Lastly, in the third utterance, Obama underscores the nation's racial history continue to affect its health. The audience perceives this from his statement, "this nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us." The implication here is that addressing deeply rooted historical issues is necessary to overcome the challenges faced today. By referencing history, Obama urges people to confront and learn from the past, indicating that a more comprehensive understanding is crucial to making meaningful progress toward racial harmony. Since racism still persists, the spirit of the march from Selma has to embolden future protests. Obama says,

> "We know the march is not yet over. We know the race is not yet won. We know that reaching that blessed destination where we are judged, all of us, by the content of our character requires admitting as much, facing up to the truth. "We are capable of bearing a great burden," James Baldwin once wrote, "once we discover that the burden is reality and arrive where reality is" (Obama, 2015, March 07).

The audience interprets that it is crucial to recognise the truth about ongoing racial disparities and discrimination as a prerequisite to realising Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a society where individuals are judged on the basis of "the content of our [their] character," not by their colour. By referencing James Baldwin's quote, Obama compels the audience to infer that the obligation of protesting racial inequality is one they cannot side step. He intends his audience to understand that they must face reality and take meaningful steps toward racial justice.

Obama invokes everybody's responsibility to bear the burden of addressing racial disparities and advocating fairness. By calling for recognition of ongoing racial tensions and discrimination, he reinforces the urgency of continuing the legacy of protests and advocacy embodied by the Selma marchers. In Obama's vision, achieving Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of character-based judgement demands a persistent engagement with current racial injustices and an ongoing commitment to meaningful change.

About Politics and Policy

In chapters 3 and 4, I explored several topics that are grouped under politics and policy in the Pew Research Center inventory. I examine the implicature in the excerpts that carry Obama's views on these topics, beginning with his thoughts on the faith that Americans have in the safety they know and the opportunities they have.

> "That is the true genius of America, a faith -- a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we

> can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted -- at least most of the time." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

In this excerpt, Obama discusses the unique aspects of America that he sees as its true greatness. The audience understands several potential implicatures based on Obama's narrative. Firstly, they grasp that Obama believes that, in America, the life people take for granted can be considered to be against the backdrop of uncertainty, instability and oppression in many parts of the world. This is what his audience would understand hearing clauses like "tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm." Secondly, they infer that Obama sees America as a place where basic needs are met, and people have a sense of security. Additionally, the audience recognises that freedom of expression and thought is a cornerstone of American society, as Obama mentions, "we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door," as it has happened in Soviet Russia and, as is generally known, continues to happen in authoritarian states (Jackson, 1987). Furthermore, they understand that starting a business in America does not require corrupt practices like bribery, as Obama implies when he says "we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe." This contention is supported by the report compiled by Transparency International (2008) that the United States ranked 18th out of 180 countries with a score of 7.3 out of 10, where 0 indicates highly corrupt and 10 highly clean. Moreover, the audience perceives that political participation is free from fear of retaliation, and that voting is generally free and fair, as suggested by "we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted -- at least most of the time" (Library of Congress, n.d.).

These implicatures shed light on Obama's perspective on the core strengths of the United States. The audience appreciates how he promotes a deeper understanding of their values and beliefs as a nation. Yet politically, the country is deeply polarised (DeSilver, 2022). Obama delineates it this way.

> "That's what's happening in America right now; change is what's happening in America.

> You, all of you who are here tonight, all who put so much heart and soul and work into this campaign, you can be the new majority who can lead this nation out of a long political darkness. Democrats, independents and Republicans who are tired of the division and distraction that has clouded Washington, who know that we can disagree without being disagreeable, who understand that, if we mobilize our voices to challenge the money and influence that stood in our way and challenge ourselves to reach for something better, there is no problem we cannot solve, there is no destiny that we cannot fulfil." (Obama, 2008, January 08)

Obama, in this excerpt, is addressing a gathering of his campaign supporters and workers, emphasising the theme of change in America's political landscape, while projecting his vision of a country united by a common purpose to bring about real change. The audience perceives that this change is driven by a diversified alliance of people who are united in their desire for a more cooperative and productive political climate.

The audience interprets several potential implicatures based on Obama's narrative. Firstly, they grasp that America is in a state of change, indicating a shifting political scenario and the prospect for a new direction in the nation's destiny, as Obama states, "change is what's happening in America." Secondly, they perceive that Obama recognises the hard work and dedication of supporters and campaign workers, suggesting that they can be the driving force for change and lead the nation towards a better future, as he mentions, "You, all of you who are here tonight, all who put so much heart and soul and work into this campaign, you can be the new majority." Additionally, the audience understands that Obama calls on Democrats, Independents, and Republicans to transcend partisan divisions and work together for the greater good of the nation. They see this in his reference to "Democrats, independents and Republicans who are tired of the division and distraction that has clouded Washington." Furthermore, they infer that Obama encourages a more civil and constructive approach to politics, promoting respectful disagreement and emphasising the power of collective voices to challenge existing systems and create positive change, as he says, "we can disagree without being disagreeable." Obama's audience knows fully well the extent and depth of the political polarisation in

the country. They see him setting the tone for his campaign by portraying America as a country on the cusp of transformation. They feel encouraged towards unity, collaboration, and a renewed approach to politics. The audience understands that Obama acts as a catalyst for this change.

Eleven months later he returns to the same malaise afflicting American politics in his Victory speech.

> "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there. There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President, and we *know* that the government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face." (Obama, 2008, November 04)

Obama acknowledges the challenges ahead, stating that the "road will be long" and the climb steep, suggesting that achieving their goals will be difficult and take time. The audience notices his hope and determination, understanding that despite setbacks and disagreements, they will eventually succeed as a nation. They recognise that although success may take longer than expected, Obama remains optimistic about the nation's future, as he says, "we may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there." The audience understands Obama's promise is his commitment to working towards a better America. They interpret his acknowledgment of the journey to progress including difficulties and failures, as he mentions, "There will be setbacks and false starts." Additionally, they perceive that Obama admits not everyone will agree with every decision or policy he makes as President, implicating the inevitability of political opposition and polarization, evident in his statement, "There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President." Furthermore, the audience understands underscoring the need for honesty, transparency. They see this in his words, "we know that the government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you

about the challenges we face." This acceptance of differing opinions and the limitations of government reflects his realistic understanding of the political landscape and his desire to address those issues with integrity. Finally, the audience is reassured by Obama's assurance of his dedication to transparency and honesty with the public about the difficulties and obstacles they will encounter. "I promise you – we as a people will get there," and his emphasis on maintaining integrity throughout the journey.

In the face of deep polarisation Obama believes American ideals and systems can pull the country from its self-destructive streak. The passage from his Yes, We Can Speech describes the can-do spirit that can overcome polarization and put the country on the path "to opportunity and prosperity."

> "It was the call of workers who organized, women who reached for the ballot, a President who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king(sic) who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land: Yes, we can, to justice and equality. Yes, we can -- to opportunity and prosperity. Yes we can heal this nation. Yes we can repair this world. Yes we can. And so, tomorrow, as we take the campaign south and west, as we learn that the struggles of the textile workers in Spartanburg are not so different than the plight of the dishwasher in Las Vegas, that the hopes of the little girl who goes to the crumbling school in Dillon are the same as the dreams of the boy who learns on the streets of L.A., we will remember that there is something happening in America, that we are not as divided as our politics suggest, that we are one people, we are one nation. And, together, we will begin the next great chapter in the American story, with three words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea: Yes, we can. Thank you, New Hampshire. Thank you. Thank you." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

Obama acknowledges the historic calls for justice, equality and advancement by referencing the Labour Union and the women's voting rights movement, President John F. Kennedy's Moon Shot and Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. In doing so he takes a broad sweep of history beginning with the Labour Movement in the early years

of independent America and in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (History.com Editors, 2020). However, anti-unionism took hold with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 (Mueller, 2021). Since then it has been an upwards struggle to unionise particularly in the private sector. So, Obama exhorts workers to continue to fight for labour rights with his call "Yes, we can." Another issue that illustrates the power of achievement through long and concerted action is the women's suffrage movement. Women obtained the right to vote after a hundred-year long struggle when the Nineteenth Amendment to the American Constitution was passed on August 18, 1920 (History.com Editors, 2024). The third instance of the power of national resolve is President John F. Kennedy's Moon Shot (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 2009). At the start of the sixties, America found itself falling behind Soviet Russia in space exploration (National Park Service, n.d.). JFK's Presidential library exhibit on the Moon Shot mentions that a leading American physicist when asked what would be found on the Moon, he replied, "Russians." President Kennedy was convinced that America could get to the Moon first.

> "On May 25, 1961, he urged the nation to make that commitment. He appealed to the spirit of adventure, to patriotic pride, and to the cause of freedom. America responded with one of the greatest mobilizations of resources and manpower in U.S. history. Eight years later, on July 20, 1969, two American astronauts walked on the Moon. It was a stunning achievement that boosted American confidence and prestige at home and around the world." (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 2009)

Finally, President Obama references Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. King's rhetoric of possibility showed America "the promised land," as if from a mountaintop, where justice and equality prevail.

Each of these historical events bear witness to the unlimited potential of a nation's resolve contained in "Yes, we can." His audience is likely to know some details of these events, just enough for them to appreciate what the can-do spirit can achieve. The audience understands Obama's "Yes, we can" as emboldening them to think big, to act strong and to never give up as they move into the second decade of the twenty first and beyond. The audience sees Obama

urging them to adopt a similar yes-we-can attitude to resolve present day problems and issues.

Several potential conversational implicatures can be inferred from Obama's message. Firstly, by referencing pivotal historical figures and movements, he implies that progress is a cumulative effort built upon the work of previous generations. Secondly, the repetition of "Yes, we can" reinforces the belief in the determination, necessary to address the critical issues of justice, equality, opportunity, and prosperity. This repetition not only signifies determination, but also unites these aspirations under a simple yet impactful phrase, accentuating the core message of his campaign. Additionally, Obama's acknowledgment of shared struggles across diverse communities, like the textile workers in Spartanburg and dishwashers in Las Vegas, highlights, for his audience, the fact that Americans experience the same reality everywhere. He emphasises that the challenges faced by one group are akin to those faced by another. The statement that "we are not as divided as our politics suggest" emphasises a common ground and shared identity as "one people, one nation." Lastly, the closing repetition, "Yes, we can," summons the nation to resoluteness. It represents the catalyst for the next chapter in the American story, signalling that together, the nation can overcome obstacles and achieve greatness.

Another instance of political and civic engagement is in his 2008 A More Perfect Union speech, where Obama recounts an emotional interaction between Ashley, a young white girl, and an elderly black man during a campaign event. He reports,

> "Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different stories and different reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time. And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he doesn't bring up a specific issue. He does not say health care or the economy. He does not say education or the war. He does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, "I am here because of Ashley."

> "I'm here because of Ashley."
>
> Now, by itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children.
>
> But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the 221 years since a band of patriots signed that document right here in Philadelphia, that is where perfection begins. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

In this excerpt, different individuals express their reasons for supporting his campaign. In his narration, he draws the attention of the audience to the touching moment when an elderly black man is asked why he was there. He does not mention any specific issue or, that he has come because of him; instead, he attributes his presence to a young white girl named Ashley. The audience understands that Obama narrated this story as a powerful illustration of the importance of the human connection between white and coloured people for reducing the divide that separate the races in the country.

Several potential implicatures can be inferred from Obama's words. The narrative showcases diverse reasons for supporting the campaign, with many individuals citing specific policy interests. However, when the elderly black man, who was quiet throughout the gathering, responds to the question as to why he supported the campaign, he attributes his presence at the meeting to Ashley. Obama memorably calls this a "single moment of recognition," because two people separated by age and colour come to a common understanding and mutual appreciation. The audience understands that Obama intends them to appreciate the fact that personal relationships transcend stereotypical political viewpoints. It emphasises, for the audience, the idea that racial and political divides are diminished when they recognise their shared humanity and its impact on one another's lives.

Thus, the audience understands that genuine human interactions, grounded in understanding and empathy, serve as the fundamental building blocks for a stronger and more perfect union.

In his speeches, Obama frequently addresses the divisions and conflicts between political parties, highlighting the challenges of working in a polarised political landscape. He states:

> "But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And above all, I will ask you join in the work of remaking this nation the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years – block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand. What began twenty-one months ago in the depths of winter must not end on this autumn night. This victory alone is not the change we seek – it is only the chance for us to make that change." (Obama, 2008, November 4)

In this excerpt, Barack Obama acknowledges the challenges ahead and emphasises his commitment to honesty, his willingness to listen to people, and the necessity of everybody's involvement in the task of transforming the nation. The audience perceives the value of transparency of different perspectives, and of active public involvement in the ongoing effort to transform the nation.

They understand Obama's profound commitment to honesty and openness in acknowledging the challenges ahead, as he states, "But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face." The audience also appreciates his willingness to listen, especially when there are disagreements, which implies a desire for dialogue and diverse perspectives. This is clear when he says, "I will listen to you, especially when we disagree."

By inviting the public to join in the work of nation-building, Obama emphasises the massive national effort required for meaningful change "the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years – block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand." The audience understands this metaphorical reference to America's historical approach to progress through the hard work, perseverance, and the grassroot efforts deeply ingrained in the nation's ethos.

Lastly, the audience understands that Obama's statement, "This victory alone is not the change we seek – it is only the chance for us to make that change," emphasises the notion that real transformation requires continuing,

concerted actions beyond electoral success. They see that their involvement is crucial in achieving the change they aspire to see in the nation.

Obama, in his 2009 Inaugural Address, focuses on, as mentioned in chapter 4, the nation's resilience and challenges them to confront adversity head on. He emphasises the enduring strength of the American spirit in overcoming economic, social, and political challenges. Obama calls on citizens to have faith in the nation's capacity to recover and thrive, and urges them to seize the opportunities ahead to build a more secure future. His speech highlights the importance of hope, perseverance, and sharing responsibility in navigating difficult times.

In his 2009 Inaugural Address, Obama affirms that,

> "This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week, or last month, or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. (Applause.)" (Obama, 2009, January 20)

In this excerpt, Obama is referring to the Great Recession 2007-08 (Duignan, 2024). Obama affirms that the United States, despite challenges, remains "the most prosperous and powerful nation on Earth." He emphasises that while the nation's workers are productive and their innovativeness is intact, there is a clear need to move beyond complacency to action. He summons the nation to "begin again the work of remaking America," urging them not to rest on passed achievements or stop when difficulties appear.

By stating "this is the journey we continue today," Obama implies that progress is ongoing, encouraging the audience begin building momentum in pursuing national goals. The statement, "We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth," highlights the nation's strengths and capabilities, suggesting a solid foundation for recovery, continued growth and progress. When Obama mentions, "our minds are no less inventive, our goods and

services no less needed," it implies that the current crisis was not precipitated by any flaw in the economy since the nation's inherent strengths remain intact and potent. Additionally, when he asks Americans to "begin again the work of remaking America," he concedes that America is broken, but not beyond recovery.

Obama addresses political and civic engagement in this excerpt from his 2011, Tucson Memorial service speech. Obama paints a poignant picture of an imaginary young girl's budding understanding of democracy and citizenship. Obama constructs the following imagined but plausible situation:

> "Imagine – imagine for a moment, here was a young girl who was just becoming aware of our democracy; just beginning to understand the obligations of citizenship; just starting to glimpse the fact that some day she, too, might play a part in shaping her nation's future. She had been elected to her student council. She saw public service as something exciting and hopeful. She was off to meet her congresswoman, someone she was sure was good and important and might be a role model. She saw all this through the eyes of a child, undimmed by the cynicism or vitriol that we adults all too often just take for granted." (Obama, 2011, January 12)

In this excerpt, President Obama speaks about any young girl, optimistic about democracy and public service, emphasising her innocence and hope for making a difference in the nation's future. The audience perceives Obama's words as an invitation to envision such a girl's genuine enthusiasm for civic engagement, highlighting her excitement and hope. By describing her perspective untainted by cynicism, Obama contrasts it with the more skeptical and jaded views often held by adults. The potential conversational implicatures emphasise the importance of preserving a positive and hopeful outlook towards democracy and public service and retain it as one grows older.

In another instance of political and civic engagement, during his remarks at the Democratic National Convention 2016, Obama emphasized a series of significant achievements aimed at advancing societal well-being and equality.

> "After a century of trying, we declared that health care in America is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for everybody.

> (Applause.) After decades of talk, we finally *began* to wean ourselves off foreign oil. We doubled our production of clean energy. (Applause.) We brought more of our troops home to their families, and we delivered justice to Osama bin Laden. (Applause.) Through diplomacy, we shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program. (Applause.) We opened up a new chapter with the people of Cuba, brought nearly 200 nations together around a climate agreement that could save this planet for our children. (Applause)." (Obama, 2016, July 27)

President Obama summarises key accomplishments and policy initiatives that he took during his presidency. The audience perceives Obama's words as highlighting significant progress and achievements, reinforcing his administration's dedication to various critical issues. In the first utterance, "After a century of trying, we declared that health care in America is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for everybody," Obama is referring to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) enacted on March 23, 2010, his enduring signature legislative achievement that "addresses health insurance coverage, health care costs, and preventive care" (US Department of Health and Human services, 2023). The audience applauds Obama's reference to the ACA not without reason. A White House blog published a few years after the passage of the ACA notes that "health insurance…provided anxiety, panic, and dread." It goes on to mention that "nearly one in two people could be discriminated against because of a pre-existing condition" (Simas, 2014). ACA marks a fundamental reorientation, signalling a commitment to ensuring equitable healthcare access and emphasising a departure from previous policies where it might have been seen as a privilege limited to a few fortunate individuals. The second utterance, "After decades of talk, we finally began to wean ourselves off foreign oil. We doubled our production of clean energy," carries the implicature that energy independence and sustainability have been reached, an achievement that previous administration was unable to achieve. Franssen (2014) reviews the President's energy policy in his first term and a part of the second one and concludes "President Obama can claim that during his administration US oil consumption peaked, CO_2 emissions declined, and both oil and natural gas production returned to a level not seen in decades. The audience sees Obama's

commitment to environmental initiatives and a move towards a more sustainable energy future. The third utterance, “We brought more of our troops home to their families, and we delivered justice to Osama bin Laden,” emphasizes national security and military success. They would recall him appearing on national television on May 01, 2011 to announce that Obama Bin Laden was killed in a US operation in Pakistan, reminding that America delivered justice to Osama Bin Laden. Once again Obama’s audience will have understood that bringing their troops back to America was a policy that the previous administration was unable to bring to fruition. Additionally, the mention of “justice to Osama bin Laden” suggests a vigorous counterterrorism effort that Obama pursued relentlessly.

At the time he took office, there were 160,000 Americans troops in Iraq. By 2012, all but 150 American troops remained in Iraq (Nelson, n.d.). The fourth utterance, “Through diplomacy, we shut down Iran’s nuclear weapons program,” centers on diplomacy and international relations. In the same paper, Nelson records the 2015 agreement that the US and five other nations reached with Iran to prevent the country from developing nuclear weapons. This statement suggests a preference for peaceful diplomatic resolutions to international issues, emphasising the importance of dialogue and negotiation in addressing nuclear proliferation concerns. Lastly, the fifth utterance, “We opened up a new chapter with the people of Cuba, brought nearly 200 nations together around a climate agreement that could save this planet for our children,” the implicature emphasises diplomatic initiatives to cease from an adversarial relationship and start and a new chapter with Cuba. The mention of opening “a new chapter” with Cuba signifies a shift to normalising American diplomatic relationship with that country, while rallying nations to negotiate a climate agreement known as The Paris Agreement, the international climate change treaty adopted by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on December 12, 2015. It officially came into effect on November 4, 2016. The primary goal of the agreement is to “limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, n.d.).

This read out of the accomplishments of Obama’s presidency at the 2016 DNC, when Hillary Clinton was the presidential nominee of the Democratic

Party, would have been seen as a pitch to the audience at the Convention Center and across the nation to vote for her.

The appeal Obama makes in support of Hillary Clinton's candidature to his audience to engage in their civic duty us reminiscent of the diverse coalition that led him to the Presidency and of which he speaks at his 2008 Victory speech.

> "For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non- believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

The audience grasps several implicatures from Obama's words. Firstly, they interpret his statements that America's "patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness," as celebrating the nation's history of embracing people from different religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Secondly, when Obama lists various religions as well as non-believers, the audience perceives approach that recognises America's respect for individuals with diverse faiths or no faith. Additionally, the audience understands that Obama references America's historical challenges of civil war and segregation to highlight the nation's inherent strength and the ability to learn from difficult times and then make progress. They see this as a testament to America's capacity to overcome divisions and emerge stronger and more united. The mention of a 'new era of peace' subtly implies a call to action, suggesting that America has a responsibility to contribute to a more peaceful world.

Obama's vision on the topic of politics and policy reflects a profound commitment to unity, transparency, and change. He emphasises the enduring strengths of America—freedom, opportunity, and resilience—while acknowledging its challenges, such as political polarisation and systemic

inequalities. By invoking historical achievements, from labor movements to civil rights and monumental policy shifts like the Affordable Care Act, Obama illustrates the power of shaping a just and equitable society.

In his "Yes, We Can" speech, he connects past struggles for justice and equality to contemporary challenges, encouraging Americans to take responsibility and be optimistic in the face of adversity. His acknowledgment of setbacks and the steep climb ahead, as expressed in his Victory and Inaugural speeches, highlights his belief in incremental progress through honesty and collaborative effort. Obama's celebration of America's diversity of faiths, cultures, and histories—sets a vision for overcoming divisions and building a more harmonious future.

For the then-present and future, Obama's rhetoric insists on active civic engagement, grassroots efforts, and cooperation to address economic, social, and environmental challenges. His message is one of hope, and the unwavering potential of a unified America to lead and transform both itself and the world.

About US Elections

Obama in his 2008 Victory speech reflects on the unconventional path that led him to the Presidency, emphasising, as I noted in chapter 3, the grassroots origins and support that fuelled his campaign to victory. He acknowledges the diverse coalition of voters who believed in the promise of change and worked tirelessly to make it a reality. By highlighting stories of individual dedication and community involvement, Obama underscores the importance of civic participation and unity in achieving political milestones. This speech celebrates his victory and also serves as a reminder of the power of ordinary citizens coming together to shape their nation's future. Obama states that,

> "I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't start with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington – it began in the backyards of Des Moines and the living rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston. It was built by working men and women who dug into what little savings they had to give five dollars and ten dollars and twenty dollars to this cause." (Obama, 2008, November 04)

Obama reflects on his journey from being a presidential candidate to President, and his audience understand that he is validating their trust and confidence in him. By stating he was not the "likeliest candidate," Obama implicates that political success and accomplishment can be unexpected. His mention of starting the campaign with limited funds and endorsements suggests that determination and support from ordinary people can compensate, and even exceed the resources that typically come from political action committees.

Emphasising the campaign's grassroots origins, with its beginnings in places like Des Moines and Charleston, he leads his audience to believe in the importance of community involvement. The image of working men and women sacrificing their limited savings to donate small amounts symbolizes a community investing in a shared belief, suggesting that even small contributions can induce significant outcomes. This highlights the power of community action in challenging established norms and making transformative change possible.

Earlier the same year in his Concession speech Obama explored the responsibility of an American citizen. He emphasised a distinct vision focused not only on his own presidential aspirations, but also on the potentially life-changing action of American citizens. He said,

> "All of the candidates in this race share these goals. All of the candidates in this race have good ideas and all are patriots who serve this country honorably. But the reason our campaign has always been different, the reason we began this improbable journey almost a year ago is because it's not just about what I will do as president. It is also about what you, the people who love this country, the citizens of the United States of America, can do to change it. That's what this election is all about. That's why tonight belongs to you. It belongs to the organizers, and the volunteers, and the staff who believed in this journey and rallied so many others to join the cause." (Obama, 2008, January 8)

In this excerpt, President Obama emphasises the role of concerted action in bringing about change in the country. The audience perceives his words as highlighting the unique aspect of his campaign, focusing on the power of the people to effect change. He acknowledges that all candidates share similar goals and "have good ideas," but he distinguishes his campaign by stressing the role

of American citizens to purposefully change the country through their actions as much as through his policy.

Obama characterises his campaign as "improbable," which his audience would understand as an acknowledgement that he might have faced scepticism, challenges and uncertainties. This acknowledgment of improbability underscores the audience's appreciation for the campaign's success over the previous year.

Moreover, Obama's emphasis on grassroots support throughout the campaign reinforces the audience's belief in their own role as active participants in the democratic process. By attributing the campaign's momentum and success to organizers, volunteers, and supporters, Obama aligns his vision with the audience's sense of civic duty and engagement in effecting meaningful change.

The phrase "the reason we began this improbable journey" not only reflects on the situation at the start of the campaign but also serves as a call to action for the audience. It encourages them to consider their own potential to influence the course of the nation through active citizenship and participation in political processes.

Obama's vision of U.S. elections centers on the power that the involvement of citizens brings to shape their nation's future. Reflecting on his journey to the Presidency, he emphasizes that his campaign's success was rooted not in traditional political advantages but in the trust, determination, and sacrifices of ordinary Americans. By highlighting the small contributions of working people in places like Des Moines and Charleston, he celebrates the capacity of getting together and acting to overcome long-established norms and create meaningful change. His acknowledgment of the shared aspirations of all candidates deepens his belief in unity and patriotism that binds Americans.

Obama's message is a call to action for every citizen to engage in the democratic process, recognising their pivotal role in driving progress. His vision reframes elections as not merely about the candidates or policies, but about empowering individuals to act as agents of change. By validating the trust and efforts of his supporters, Obama inspires confidence in the principle

that active civic participation—organizing, volunteering, and voting—can redefine what is possible in American democracy.

About Religion

> "The man I met more than twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another, to care for the sick and lift up the poor. He is a man who served his country as a United States Marine, and who has studied and lectured at some of the finest universities and seminaries in the country, and who over 30 years has led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth -- by housing the homeless, ministering to the needy, providing day care services and scholarships and prison ministries, and reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS. In my first book, *Dreams from my Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity, and it goes as follows: People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

Obama continues to give a personal account of his relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright, someone who had been publicly controversial. By recounting Wright's positive influence on his faith and highlighting his contributions to the community, Obama builds a case for Wright's moral integrity and social commitment, inviting the audience to reconsider their judgments of the man based on more than the media's portrayal of him.

From the audience's perspective, several elements standout at different levels. First, by invoking his personal connection to Wright, Obama describes him as a man who introduced him to his Christian faith and has lived a life of service, including time as a U.S. Marine and educator at prestigious institutions. These references establish Wright's credibility and position him as a person of virtue, which implicitly strengthens Obama's own credibility in associating with him. The audience, through these details, understands that Obama is asserting his own judgment as thoughtful and well-founded. The conversational implicature here lies in what Obama does not explicitly state: by describing Wright's good deeds—helping the poor, housing the homeless, and caring for

those with HIV/AIDS—Obama implies that Wright's controversial statements, which the media had prominent, should not overshadow his life's work. The audience is encouraged to infer that a person's public missteps do not necessarily define their entire character. This requires the audience to grasp the underlying message that human beings are complex, and judgment should be compassionate.

Furthermore, when Obama refers to his first experience at Wright's church, describing the emotional intensity of the congregation— "People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out"—the audience can infer the powerful communal experience that shaped Obama's faith journey. This part of the speech paints a vivid picture of spiritual awakening that many listeners might relate to in their own religious experiences. The implicature suggests that such a meaningful experience of faith must be taken into account when evaluating both Obama's relationship with Wright and his values.

Obama continues to describe the nature of religious commitment and experience in this passage from the 2009 A More Perfect Union speech, which recounts his spiritual experience at the Trinity Church from his book *Dreams from my Father*.

> "In my first book, *Dreams from my Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity, and it goes as follows: People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters. And in that single note -- hope -- I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories of survival and freedom and hope became our stories, my story. The blood that spilled was our blood; the tears our tears; until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black. In chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a meaning to reclaim

> memories that we didn't need to feel shame about -- memories that all people might study and cherish and with which we could start to rebuild. That has been my experience at Trinity." (Obama, 2008, March 18)

In this excerpt, Obama reflects on his experience at Trinity and how biblical narratives connect to the historical ones of the experience of the African-Americans. He emphasises the significance of shared stories and the role of the church in uniting people, particularly to the African American community. They shape their identity and sense of purpose. The audience perceives Obama's words as reiterating the church's role in fostering a deep sense of community, resilience, and shared history.

Obama describes the vivid scene of his first service at Trinity, where "people began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters." This imagery captures the powerful, emotional dynamic and uplifting atmosphere of the church. The audience understands this as a testament to the authenticity of worship in Trinity. He further elaborates on how the stories from the Bible resonated with the experiences of ordinary black people, stating, "I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones." The audience observes the metaphoric blending of the personal and communal with Biblical history, which suggests that these stories of struggle and triumph are mirrored in the lives of the African-American community. By stating, "Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black," Obama emphasizes that while the experiences of the black community are distinct, they also hold universal significance. The audience understand that they are being urged to see their personal and communal struggles as being in common with humanity. Obama's reflection suggests that the church not only provides religious guidance but also plays a critical role in empowering individuals and communities by connecting them to a broader historical and cultural context. The audience recognises that this linkage transform the historical and currently lived realities from being a shameful to one that is resilient and liberating. Obama's words are a heartfelt acknowledgment of the profound impact of the church and spiritual leaders in shaping beliefs, values,

and a sense of identity. These implicatures underscore the importance of community, shared history, and the power of faith to inspire and unite people in the pursuit of a better future.

Talking about religious freedom and restrictions, Obama in this heart touching eulogy, Obama reflects on the historical significance of the church where Reverend Clementa Pinckney preached. He points out that

> "When there were laws banning all-black church gatherings, services happened here anyway, in defiance of unjust laws. When there was a righteous movement to dismantle Jim Crow, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached from its pulpit, and marches began from its steps. A sacred place, this church. Not just for blacks, not just for Christians, but for every American who cares about the steady expansion -- (applause) -- of human rights and human dignity in this country; a foundation stone for liberty and justice for all. That's what the church meant. (Applause.)" (Obama, 2015, June 26).

President Obama emphasises at the eulogy for Reverend Clementa Pinckney, the historical significance of the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and its role in the Civil Rights movement. He projects the Church as a symbol "of human rights and dignity." The audience perceives Obama's words as a tribute to the Church's pivotal role in the fight for equality.

Obama mentions that despite laws banning all-black church gatherings, services continued "in defiance of unjust laws." The audience sees that the Church backed its words with action when it actively participated in bringing "justice and freedom to all." The reference to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preaching from its pulpit and marches beginning from its steps underscores the church's historical significance in the civil rights movement. Describing the Church as "a sacred place" for all Americans will move his congregation to observe that Dylan Roof, the killer of ten people in this Church violated this sacredness when he shot and killed them.

Obama's vision of religion emphasises its power to unite, inspire, and uplift individuals and communities while promoting shared identity. Reflecting on his spiritual journey, he describes the profound influence of the church in connecting personal and communal struggles to the universal themes of hope,

liberation, and purpose. As in his vivid recollection of his first service at Trinity, Obama highlights the Church's role as a vessel for transformation, where Biblical narratives merge with the lived experiences of African Americans, offering a sense of dignity and strength amidst adversity. Obama also underscores the AME Church's historical significance, celebrating its defiance of unjust laws and its pivotal role in the Civil Rights movement, exemplified by leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In the present of his speaking and the future, Obama envisions religion as a force for social justice and human dignity, transcending divisions of race and creed to serve as a foundation for liberty and equality. By honouring the legacy of religious institutions and leaders, Obama urges his audience to embrace their potential to address societal disparities and strengthen the pursuit of a better future.

About Gun Violence

In the context of politics and policy, Obama addresses the issue of gun violence in his remarks at the memorial service for the victims of the shooting in Tucson, Arizona. Obama contends that:

> "They believed -- they believed, and I believe that we can be better. Those who died here, those who saved life here –- they help me believe. We may not be able to stop all evil in the world, but I know that how we treat one another, that's entirely up to us. (Applause.)." (Obama, 2011, January 12)

Obama reflects on the capacity of America as a whole to "be better," and reduce gun violence. His audience understands that the source of Obama's optimism in moments of grief is the heroic effort of those who acted courageously to save lives. Obama's statement that "we may not be able to stop all evil in the world" harmonizes with the audience's awareness of the challenges America faces controlling gun violence. The audience would have wondered whether "evil" refers euphemistically to gun violence. They would recall "that the United States has long resisted solutions to its gun violence epidemic" (Ayers et. al., 2020), and therefore, it will continue to consume the country.

Yet, the audience would have understood Obama's hope that something good can come out of such tragic events. People can begin to be better towards

one another. Obama does not explicate "how we treat one another." The audience would implicate that people can be respectful and compassionate to one another. The audience would also implicate that Obama's exhortation is a public-spirited goal and a practical one that avoids dealing with the complex problem of gun control.

The potential implicatures highlight the importance of individual beliefs in positive change in the face of tragic events. It emphasises the influence individuals have in shaping their society through their actions, even when faced with the reality of evil. The audience applauds Obama's inspiring message.

Another kind of violence is the one that targets Black communicates and the police.

> "Hillary knows we can work through racial divides in this country when we *realize* the worry black parents feel when their son leaves the house isn't no different than what a brave cop's family feels when he puts on the blue and goes to work; that we can honor police and treat every community fairly. (Applause.) We can do that." (Obama, 2016, July 27)

Obama draws a parallel between the experiences of families of police officers and parents of Black children suggesting that empathy and recognition of shared humanity can help resolve tensions. The applause indicates the audience's agreement and support for this message.

Several potential implicatures can be inferred from Obama's words. Firstly, by acknowledging the fears of black parents and police officers' families, Obama implies that both sides have valid concerns that need to be understood and addressed. This suggests the need for dialogue and mutual understanding. Secondly, by mentioning the need to "honor police and treat every community fairly," the audience implicates that respect for law enforcement and equitable treatment of all communities are complementary goals. This indicates an approach to resolving racial divides that balances justice and respect for all parties.

Obama's vision for addressing gun violence brings together the themes of compassion and community. The Tucson Memorial speech emphasises the potential for America to "be better," drawing hope from the courage and humanity displayed by different individuals during crises. His reflection on how

individuals treat one another highlights the power of compassion as a tool for societal healing, even in the absence of immediate policy solutions to the complex problem of gun control. Obama's message avoids prescribing detailed strategies, but calls for a shift in everyone's behaviour and mutual empathy. Further, Obama addresses the intersection of gun violence and racial divides by acknowledging the common anxieties of Black families and police officers' families. He urges that communities honor law enforcement fairly, and the police to treat all communities. For the then-present and future, Obama's vision promotes dialogue, empathy, and joint action as pivotal in creating a safer, more equitable society, where the roots of violence can be addressed through the strength of community bonds and a commitment to justice.

About International Affairs

In the realm of International Affairs, Obama's inaugural address articulated a vision of America's role on the global stage. He declared,

> "And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more. (Applause.)." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

In this excerpt, Obama addresses the global community, emphasizing America's commitment to fostering peaceful and respectful relationships with all nations, irrespective of their size or influence. The audience perceives Obama's words as a message of friendship and cooperation, a resetting of America's relations with all countries with a clear declaration of America's readiness to take a leading role in creating peaceful and dignified futures for all.

Obama projects several significant conversational implicatures. Firstly, by addressing not just Americans but "all the other peoples and governments" globally, he commits to diplomacy, hinting at a cooperative approach to world affairs. Secondly, by stating that "America is a friend of each nation," he suggests a desire for peaceful and amicable relationships with all countries, reflecting an open diplomatic and collaborative outlook. Additionally, by expressing readiness "to lead once more," he implies that isolationism will not be US Policy under his watch.

The audience can infer from his words a reassurance of America's role as a stabilising force and a partner in international relations. By mentioning "the small village where my father was born," Obama personalises his message, suggesting a connection to all parts of the world, no matter how remote or humble. This further suggests a turn from a hawkish approach to diplomacy to a commitment to universal values of "peace and dignity." Overall, the excerpt implies a diplomatic, cooperative, and proactive stance for America in international relations, reinforcing the idea that the nation seeks to be a positive force on the global stage.

Later in the same speech, Obama reiterates his vision of America's role on the global stage. He sends a clear message to global leaders with his statement, "To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. (Applause.)"

As mentioned in chapter 4, Obama does not name the "leaders" he mentions in this utterance. The audience will understand that it would have been diplomatically unwise to name them, but they would know who they would be by the descriptive appellation he gives them- those who "sow conflict," those who "blame their society's ills on the West," and those who "destroy." Leaders of Iran and North Korea would be countries he refers to here (Pew Research Center, 2010). He emphasizes that the judgment of their people will be based on constructive actions and nation- building, rather than destructive pursuits. Firstly, by cautioning against sowing conflict and blaming the West for societal problems, he calls for responsible and peace-oriented governance. The mention of "your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy" implies that history judges leaders on their constructive actions and nation-building efforts, suggesting that leaders "prioritize positive contributions to society." Obama's audience would also infer that he maintains high ideals of democracy and governance when he alleges the undemocratic misgovernance of authoritarian leaders.

In the same speech and still speaking on international affairs, Obama underscores for his audience the importance of responsible governance. He sends a clear message to unnamed leaders saying,

> "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist. (Applause)." (Obama, 2009, January 20)

The audience perceives Obama's words as a call to such leaders to execute their powers conscientiously and unimpeachably.

In his remarks at the acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, he reflects on how philosophers, clerics, and statesmen have endeavoured to control violence through the concept of a "just war." He observes:

> "And over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war.
>
> The concept of a "just war" emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence.
>
> Of course, we know that for most of history, this concept of "just war" was rarely observed. The capacity of human beings to think up new ways to kill one another proved inexhaustible, as did our capacity to exempt from mercy those who look different or pray to a different God." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In his exposition of the concept of a "just war," the audience note that he is highlighting the efforts made by thinkers and statesmen to regulate and justify the use of force in conflicts throughout history. They grasp Obama's implicit messages about ethical standards and the persistent challenge of applying them in times of conflict. The audience grasps several implicatures from Obama's words. Firstly, they interpret his mention of the development of codes of law and the concept of a "just war" over time as reflecting humanity's ongoing quest for moral progress and the universal desire to mitigate violence in society, though an unsuccessful one in both respects. However, they also recognize Obama acknowledging that the ideal of a "just war" was often not adhered to throughout history, revealing a gap between ethical principles and their application in wartime.

Moreover, the audience would, doubtless, recall numerous instances of

humanity's capacity to devise new means of violence as a reflection on human ingenuity, designing more and more destructive tools of war. It can be inferred that this is less an appeal to continue the effort to promote peace and restrain destructive tendencies, but more a defense of America's military involvement. Additionally, when Obama mentions people's incapacity to extend mercy to those who are different from the majority, the audience perceives a critique of discrimination and prejudice, and Obama urging for greater empathy in human interactions.

In the same speech his audience observe him, addressing the complex and often harsh realities of international relations, emphasizing the inevitability of violent conflict and the necessary use of force. He concedes,

> "We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth: We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations -- acting individually or in concert -- will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In this excerpt, President Obama emphasizes the inescapable reality that world peace without conflict anywhere is an unattainable goal. From the audience's perspective, Obama's words highlight a pragmatic approach to global affairs, acknowledging that while the ideal of a conflict-free world is noble, it is not feasible given the persistent and deep-rooted nature of conflicts. By admitting that "nations -- acting individually or in concert -- will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified," the audience perceives Obama's acceptance of the complexity of international relations and the inevitability of war. During the Bosnian conflict, NATO shot down four Bosnian Serb aircraft in February 1994 because the aircraft had violated a UN mandated no-fly zone. Late in 1995, NATO launched more airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs after the Srebrenica massacre in July of that year, in which 8000 Bosniak men and boys were killed, and then the attack on a marketplace in Sarajevo happened. Eventually, NATO's involvement compelled the Bosnian Serbs to agree to a US sponsored peace plan. It is likely that the addressees at the Nobel Peace Prize would have seen NATO's involvement in Bosnia as a prime instance of the moral justification for military involvement that Obama referred to in his speech. While peaceful resolutions are always preferable, there

are circumstances in which the use of force becomes necessary to defend national interests or pursue justice, moral and practical considerations justify military action.

In another excerpt, highlighting War and International Conflict from the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, Obama addresses the complex global attitudes towards military action and America's role as a superpower. Obama declares:

> "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism -- it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason.
>
> I raise this point, I begin with this point because in many countries there is a deep ambivalence about military action today, no matter what the cause. And at times, this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America, the world's sole military superpower." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In this excerpt, President Obama defends the notion that acknowledging the necessity of resorting to war does not suggest cynicism, but an acceptance of historical realities and the limitations inherent in human nature and rationality. His audience would have discerned Obama articulating the compelling reasons that justify the use of force. Obama assertion, "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism -- it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason," implies that while idealism is important, realism must guide actions in the face of historical and current realities. When he notes, "in many countries there is a deep ambivalence about military action today, no matter what the cause," Obama is recognising a widespread reluctance to support military interventions, including those that the US has made. This highlights the universal desire for peaceful conflict resolution and reflects an understanding of the complex emotions and concerns surrounding the use of force. The audience perceives this as Obama's acknowledgment of the prevailing sentiment against military actions and his respect for these views. By stating, "this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America, the world's sole military superpower," Obama points to the scepticism directed specifically at the United States. His European audience will discern that he is defending America's past and present military interventions around the globe. This implicates the need for the U.S. to navigate its role carefully,

considering global perceptions and acting with transparency and prudence. The audience understands that Obama is urging the U.S. to be mindful of its actions and the impact they have on international trust and relations.

The implicatures emphasise Obama's attempt to contextualize the need for force within a historical and realistic framework. He acknowledges and respects the prevalent scepticism towards military actions, emphasizing the necessity for thoughtful consideration and international understanding in navigating complex geopolitical landscapes. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of the United States being mindful of global perceptions and acting with prudence and transparency in international affairs.

In the same speech, Obama emphasizes the importance of adhering to international standards regarding the use of force, highlighting its impact on global dynamics. Obama declares:

> "To *begin* with, I believe that all nations-- strong and weak alike -- must adhere to standards that govern the use of force. I -- like any head of state -- reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend my nation. Nevertheless, I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don't." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

President Obama discusses the importance of nations adhering to standards governing the use of force, most prominently the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols (International Committee of the Red Cross, n.d.). His audience would know that the Iraq war was continuing when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and recalls what happens when laws governing war are not followed. For instance, Americans soldiers were found to have engaged in horrific atrocities against Iraqi prisoners in 2004, when photographs appeared of them being tortured (Volle, 2024). From the audience's perspective, Obama's words stress the need for a consistent ethical approach to international relations and the use of force. Obama asserts at the same time, "I -- like any head of state -- reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend my nation." The audience understands that he is acknowledging the inherent right of nations to defend themselves, which is a fundamental aspect of sovereignty. However, by immediately following this with, "Nevertheless, I am convinced that adhering to

standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don't," Obama implies that while unilateral action is sometimes necessary, it is adherence to international norms that ultimately fosters legitimacy. The statement that all nations "must adhere to standards that govern the use of force" suggests an ideal of a treaty-based international order. The audience perceives this as Obama advocating for a global community bound by shared principles, where even powerful nations are expected to follow the same ethical guidelines. This reinforces the idea of fairness and justice in international relations.

In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, Obama asserts another aspect of his thinking on international affairs:

> "I believe that peace is unstable where citizens are denied the right to speak freely or worship as they please; choose their own leaders or assemble without fear. Pent-up grievances fester, and the suppression of tribal and religious identity can lead to violence. We also know that the opposite is true. Only when Europe became free did it finally find peace. America has never fought a war against a democracy, and our closest friends are governments that protect the rights of their citizens. No matter how callously defined, neither America's interests -- nor the world's -- are served by the denial of human aspirations." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In this excerpt, President Obama articulates his belief in the fundamental importance of human rights and democratic freedoms for achieving lasting peace in the world. He asserts that peace is unsustainable in societies where citizens are denied the basic freedoms of speech, worship and assembly, such as in Afghanistan, China, Cuba, Egypt and Russia (Freedom House, n.d.). The audience observes that Obama strongly advocates for democracy and human rights, arguing that these are essential for preventing violence and unrest. Obama's declaration, that "peace is unstable where citizens are denied the right to speak freely or worship as they please," implicates that true peace is inherently linked to share freedom and rights of individuals. This suggests to the audience that lasting stability and harmony cannot be achieved through repression. The reference to the history of Europe when he says, "Only when

Europe became free did it finally find peace," compel his audience to note that freedom and democracy are necessary conditions for peace. This historical context helps the audience understand that real-world evidence supports his stance. The mention of America's history, "America has never fought a war against a democracy," enable his audience to understand with certainty that democracies are inherently more peaceful and democratic countries are reliable allies to America and to one another. Obama's assertion that "our closest friends are governments that protect the rights of their citizens" reinforces for the audience the idea that the most stable and trustworthy nations are those that uphold human rights (Haan, 2024). This implies that the audience should value and support democratic principles not only as a moral imperative, but also as a strategic advantage for international relations. Lastly, by stating, "No matter how callously defined, neither America's interests -- nor the world's -- are served by the denial of human aspirations," Obama implies that policies or actions that suppress human rights are ultimately counterproductive.

Finally, Obama indicates how human rights can be advanced in countries where it is lacking or it is trampled upon with impunity. He conveys this message to world leaders saying,

> "Let me also say this: The promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone. At times, it must be coupled with painstaking diplomacy. I know that engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation. But I also know that sanctions without outreach -- condemnation without discussion -- can carry forward only a crippling status quo. No repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door." (Obama, 2009, December 10)

In this excerpt, President Obama asserts that human rights cannot be championed by just verbal appeals and exhortations, or even sanctions, even the longest running ones on Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria (Elmerraji, 2023). His audience note Obama's commitment to diplomacy, and sanctions, coupled with dialogue as his preferred mode of conducting international relations.

From the audience's perspective, Obama's strongly advocates to human rights everywhere. When he states that "the promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone," the audience understands that he is calling for a multifaceted strategy that goes beyond mere rhetoric. This implicates that achieving human rights goals requires both comprehensive diplomatic efforts and actionable steps. When Obama acknowledges that engagement with repressive regimes might lack the immediate gratification of strong condemnation, the audience perceives his recognition of the inherent complexity of international relations. He hints that while such engagement might not be emotionally satisfying, it is a strategic necessity to effect meaningful change. His audience note that his perspective highlights the importance of strategic and thoughtful actions in diplomacy. The statement that "sanctions without outreach" and "condemnation without discussion" can perpetuate "a crippling status quo," suggests to his audience that isolated punitive measures are insufficient to create positive change. It implicates that such actions alone do not lead to peace and that engaging in dialogue and fostering communication is crucial. The idea that a repressive regime needs the "choice of an open door" implies that offering a path to change, even for regimes with a history of repression, is a necessary diplomatic approach.

Obama's vision for international affairs is deeply rooted in diplomacy, the promotion of human rights, and pragmatic realism. In his Inaugural Address, he emphasised America's readiness to lead globally, not through dominance, but by maintaining peaceful, dignified relationships with large and small nations. His message of mutual respect and cooperation reflects a shift towards a commitment to universal values. He calls leaders worldwide to prioritise nation-building and governance over conflict, implicitly condemning authoritarian tendencies while offering the "open door" of diplomacy to those willing to reform.

Acknowledging the realities of global conflict, Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech balances the ideal of peace with the necessity of force in exceptional circumstances. His articulation of the "just war" underscores a commitment to ethical standards, even in military action, advocating for adherence to international norms that strengthen legitimacy. Recognising the scepticism toward military interventions and the U.S.'s role as a superpower,

Obama urged thoughtful response made against the backdrop of global conflicts and pursuit of democracy everywhere.

For the immediate present and the future, Obama's meticulous approach defends dialogue over division. He ties the advancement of global peace to the promotion of human rights, democracy and freedom. His vision sets a path for America to act not as a unilateral force, but as a responsible leader fostering a more just and cooperative world.

Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of implicatures in Obama's speeches, I now present some generalisations that follow from the major findings of the analysis of the implicatures that Obama intended his audiences to arrive at by listening to him. It covers a wide range of topics and issues that play a significant role in American political discourse. The family, the role of spouses, and the upbringing of children occupy a central place in American society. Family centredness, value-based upbringing of children, mutually supportive spouses are some of the significant issues relating to the family. Obama's references to his family would have been received by his audiences as exemplifying these values.

I have noted that the majority of the issues Obama touches upon in his speeches are identical to the topics that Aristotle deemed to be appropriate to deliberative or political speeches. Obama has employed a two-pronged rhetorical strategy in which he, first, upholds a mirror to society, presenting facts as he sees them and following it up with presenting a picture of how America can get past itself to "…a more just, more equal, more caring and more prosperous America," as he expressed it in A More Perfect Union address. This outstanding consistency in his oratory is captured in the observation made by Michael Dimock, the President of the Pew Research Center, in a piece that he wrote after Obama's presidency ended. In this article, published January 10, 2017, "How America Changed During Barack Obama's Presidency," Dimock (2017) states at the very outset, "Barack Obama campaigned for the U.S. presidency on a *platform of change* (emphasis added) …". This is a change from present and past conditions to a better future. It is this vision of change that Obama articulated in his political campaigns and through his presidency. His audiences would have comprehended the outlines of the change envisioned.

The inequality that lies at the heart of America and the struggle for civil rights find mention in many of his speeches, as I have observed in this chapter. Equally, his audiences would have noted the optimism that led him to point to the time when all Americans can be truly free and enjoy all the rights that is lawfully theirs, even if it does not happen in "our lifetimes." He invites his audience to responsible citizenship, and civic engagement, even though the "perfection" that guarantees full and fair opportunities for participatory democracy has yet to be achieved.

Obama talks frequently about some of the malaise that afflict America—gun violence, political polarisation, discrimination, and racism. During his Presidency there were twenty incidents of mass killings during his tenure (Follman et al., 2024). He had the solemn responsibility to mourn with his nation as much as to comfort them. I have noted his words of empathy and solace at the Tucson Memorial and eulogy to the Reverend Pinckney, all of which his audiences would have soaked in. His views on political polarisation and the Congressional dysfunction resulting from it are honest. But, his audience will have understood that this was a problem he had no fixes for, as much as he hoped that the conditions that cause them will, in due course of time, diminish in strength, if not disappear. Regarding systemic racism and the discrimination, it engendered, his audiences would have understood that he believed in Martin Luther King Jr. memorable assertion, "The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Obama put forward his views on international affairs and wars in several of his speeches. He had the onerous task of delivering a Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech at a time when America was at war in Iraq and Afghanistan and he oversaw it as Commander-in-Chief. His remarks in this address and several others that I have examined will have been received cautiously, since his stance was defending his country's military actions.

I now move on to the theoretical findings proceeding from the analysis of implicatures employing Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims. The analysis concludes that in political speeches, especially during campaigns, the maxims of Quality and Quantity may be deemed less critical compared to those of Relevance and Manner. The primary objective of deliberative speeches is persuasion, rather than the dissemination of factual information. Persuasion

takes precedence over objective truth. For this reason, possibility, rather than truthfulness and informativeness, is relevant to political speeches. This explains why Grice's maxims in their original formulation ought to be amended to account for the inferences that the audience can draw or can make from such speeches. I return to his issue in the concluding chapter. On the other hand, the principles of Relevance and Manner are crucial for creating compelling arguments that gel with audiences. The examination of specific examples from Obama's speeches illustrates how implicatures can convey speaker meanings, which become audience meanings that evoke emotional responses.

From a theoretical perspective, the analysis of conversational implicatures in Obama's speeches reveals that effective political communication relies heavily on the use of implicature. While these implicatures enhance the persuasive and engaging qualities of a speech, they differ from true conversational implicatures because a speech, being a one-way form of communication, lacks the interactive dynamics of a conversation. Therefore, it is more appropriate to refer to the implicature in a speech as "oratorical implicatures." This understanding of implicature not only sheds light on Obama's rhetorical strategies, but also provides insights into the broader landscape of political communication.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Towards a theory of the colloquy in a public speech

The preceding chapters laid the groundwork for developing a pragmatic theory of the colloquy in public speech, particularly through the oratory of Barack Obama. Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive review of existing literature, emphasising the rhetorical, narrative, and pragmatic dimensions of Obama's speeches, while identifying gaps that this thesis sought to address. Chapter 3 traces Obama's evolution as an orator, providing historical and contextual backgrounds to key speeches and establishing his place within the classical rhetorical tradition. Chapter 4 examines the presuppositional worlds embedded in Obama's speeches, highlighting how he constructs shared knowledge and frames discourse on themes such as family and relationships, inequality, civil rights, politics and policy, US elections, religion, gun violence and international affairs. Chapter 5 analyses the implicatures generated in Obama's speeches through the lens of Gricean maxims and the Cooperative Principle, revealing how Obama invokes dual timeframes and rhetorical strategies to communicate meanings beyond the literal. Together, these chapters demonstrate that Obama's public discourse establishes a cognitive dialogue with his audience, laying the foundation for a theory public speaking as a colloquy distinct from a conversation or a dialogue proper. I now go on to develop this theory of the colloquy in a speech.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* identifies deliberative or political speeches as those aimed at persuading an audience to undertake an action that is possible. It occurs through "Pisteis*, or the Means of Persuasion in Public Address"* (1355b; 2). He elucidates, "Of the *pisteis* provided through speech there are three species; for some are in the character [*ēthos*] of the speaker, and some in disposing the listener in some way [*pathos*], and some in the speech [*logos*] itself, by showing or seeming to show something" (1356a; 1.2.3).

A speaker demonstrates character when he is seen by the audience to be "worthy of credence" (1356a; 1.2.4) and is fair-minded "[*epieikeia*]" (1356a; 1.2.5). Aristotle asserts that character is "the most authoritative form of persuasion" (1356a; 1.2.5). Elaborating on this initial statement in Book 1, Aristotle identifies three features of a speaker's character in Book 3, namely "practical wisdom [*phronesis*] and virtue [*arete*] and goodwill [*eunoia*]"

(1378a; 2.1.5). Niu and Ying (2016), after reviewing several studies on ethos, construct a "A Reframed Model of Ethos," in which they identify the sub-elements of the three traits that Aristotle mentions in Book 3. According to them, wisdom includes experience, expertise and authority, virtue is seen in justice, honesty, stateliness and goodwill embodies understanding, empathy and responsiveness (46).

These elements of ethos are identifiable in Obama's speeches by mapping the surface level meaning of his utterances to the denotations or the traits that characterise ethos. In the DNC 2004 speech, he speaks of the experience of meeting a wide range of people across America "-- in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks." His expertise in law is reflected in his discussion of the Ferguson Report in the Selma speech and its implications for race relations in America, as also in the covert reference to the Geneva Conventions in his Nobel Prize Acceptance speech. On the Ferguson Report Obama declares, "What happened in Ferguson may not be unique, but it's no longer endemic. It's no longer sanctioned by law or by custom. And before the Civil Rights Movement, it most surely was." He acknowledges that the narrative in the Ferguson Report is troubling, while also rejecting the notion that nothing has changed since the Civil Rights Movement. He speaks with authority in his 2008 Election Night Victory Speech when he articulates the vision he has for America through his Presidency. He asserts his leadership by acknowledging the significance of the moment, stating,

> "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer." (Obama, 2008, November 4)

Obama remarks on the just struggle for equality in America. He says "We do a disservice to the cause of justice by intimating that bias and discrimination are immutable, that racial division is inherent to America" (Obama. 2015, March 07). There are instances when Obama is honest with his addressees as, for instance, in the Yes, We Can speech, wherein he acknowledges the challenges the country could face to bring about change "We know the battle ahead will be long, and our climb will be steep." Obama's statesmanship is

evident in the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, in which he acknowledges the honour of receiving the Peace Prize, while simultaneously addressing the entanglements of war and peace with a balanced and respectful tone at a time when his country was at war. He articulates it in this manner, *"*I face the world as it is, and I work to make it better.*"*

In the Tucson Memorial Service Speech, Obama shows that he understands the emotional impact of tragic events as he reflects on the shared grief of the nation and his recognition of the need for healing and unity in the face of tragedy when he says, *"*We may not have the power to prevent all evil in the world, but we do have the power to make the world a little bit better.*"* He also empathises with the families of the victims, as he suggests how they can deal with loss and its pain, *"*We may not be able to control the events that have been wrought upon us, but we can choose how to respond.*"* His openness to be responsive as President can be clearly seen in his Election Night Victory Speech. He assures his audience, "I will listen to you, especially when we disagree," highlighting his commitment to addressing the needs of all citizens, regardless of their political affiliation.

The second means of persuasion Aristotle describes is *pathos*. He states, "The emotions [*pathē*] are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites (1378a; 2.2.8)" Obama evokes this emotional response to his speeches through the power of matching his words to the exigencies of the situation in which he is speaking. At the Tucson Memorial he said, "They believed -- they believed, and I believe that we can be better. Those who died here, those who saved life here –- they help me believe." These words proffer hope in a moment of grief. In the Charleston eulogy, Obama uplifts the Emmanuel AME Church and celebrates its rich contribution to the Civil Rights Movement when the Church is engulfed in profound sorrow.

The third means of persuasion is *logos*. Regarding *logos*, Dascal and Gross (1999) observe that "the logos of actual argument is never separable from ethos and pathos (p. 118). Character and emotion are elements of persuasive argumentation. Aristotle includes "paradigm, or example" (1393a; 2.20.1) and enthymeme as persuasive tools. Obama employs stories to exemplify his

argument, as for instance, when he narrates the story of Ashley and an unnamed old black man (A More Perfect Union). His Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance speech is replete with logical arguments in defence of a "just war" and his policies as Commander-in Chief.

Dascal and Gross (1999) note that Aristotle's work *On Rhetoric* is a manual which focuses on "the effort" of making a speech and less on its "effect." For this reason, they propose a theory that effects a union of Aristotelean rhetoric and Gricean pragmatics by providing a cognitive reading of Aristotle's appeals. Their study focuses on "calculating" in Gricean style the cognitive counterparts of Aristotle's ethos, pathos and logos. They argue by using illustrations in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, as well as utterances in a conversation to suggest that what is *ethos* and *pathos* are the "products of audience inference" Dascal and Gross (1999, p. 121). They state that "*pathos* and *ethos* are evoked with the Cooperative Principle and meaning$_{NN}$, as modified for persuasive exchanges." In the case of *logos*, they explain using examples from classical sources that the inference is of the Gricean type, and include both rhetorical deduction as well as rhetorical induction "or paradigmatic reasoning from examples or science" (p. 118). They also crucially observe, "to these forms of reasoning by implication must be added to other forms of inference, which were not noted by Aristotle; *implicatures* (emphasis added) and *presupposition implicatures* (emphasis added)" (p. 118). However, they do not show how these two kinds of non-natural meaning are inferred in a persuasive speech.

This study has focused on the inference of presuppositions and implicatures as exemplars of non-natural meaning, which Dascal and Gross (1999) include in *logos*. However, the analysis of presupposition and implicature in two different chapters make it appear that they are different sorts of non-natural meanings that are unrelated to each other. Separating their analysis between two chapters was an explicatory convenience. The analysis in the previous two chapters justify invoking the principle of a feeding relationship from presupposition to implicature. I now go on to explore how this feeding relationship works, first, in a conversation and then, in a persuasive speech.

Consider the following example.

(6.1) A: I'm out of petrol.

B: There's a garage just round the corner. (Grice 1975, p. 51)

Presuppositions in (6.1) A's utterance, where >> = presupposes

a. >> A is on a journey from point X to point Y.

b. >> A has run out of petrol.

c. >> A has reached a built-up human habitation, perhaps a town.

d. >> A is unfamiliar with the place.

e. >> A has been waiting to ask a passer-by for directions to the nearest petrol station.

f. >> A either failed to watch his fuel gauge as he was driving or he had not passed a fuel station.

g. >> B is likely to be a resident of the town.

Therefore, B can say "there is a garage round the corner." In a gloss, Grice notes A's inference from B's utterance, that there is a garage that is open or may be open.

Now consider what might happen if the conversation between A and B had proceeded differently from the situation that Grice conjured up.

(6.2) A: I'm out of petrol.

B: There's a garage about 100 miles away.

In this case all of the speaker presuppositions remain as in (6.1a-g), but A's inference will now be materially different. A deduces that there is no garage in this town and that the nearest petrol station is a long way from where they are, but he does not know exactly how far away it is. In this situation, A is likely to conclude that he has a problem on his hands, and his options would, on a commonplace understanding of the real world, be different than if the garage were round the corner.

This change in implicature happens because the worlds in the two exchanges have changed. In (6.1), the world invoked includes the following set of entities.

(6.3) $w_{townX:}$ { A, B, car, garage}

A new location in another world is mentioned in (6.2).

(6.4) w_{townY} {garage}

This analysis of possible *worlds* is consistent with its definition in Lewis (1986). (6.3) and (6.4) reference different worlds, each of which "is a maximal connected object", wherein "any two of its parts bear some spatial temporal

relation to each other (Menzel, 2024).” Furthermore, “individual **a** exists in the world **w**” if “**a** is a part of **w**.”

Additionally, presupposition is relevant in a world **w** at a particular point in time **t** in **w.** For example, individual A exists in many worlds, personal and/or professional. This plurality notwithstanding, at the moment of uttering (6.1), the presuppositions that are inferable from A’s utterance are relevant to his current world w_{townX}, because A is stuck in a situation w_{townX}. Thus, B’s response changes and he refers to a garage about 100 miles away, the world changes to another place i.e. town Y, changing the world from w_{townX} to w_{townY}. Therefore, I conclude that the presupposition in an utterance is dependent on or relevant to the world within which it is spoken.

The analysis of the conversation between A and B unpacks details of its context that took more than the 13 words in the original exchange. It stands to reason that the context of each of the themes in Obama’s speeches would be expansive and perhaps, impossible to map in their entirety. Slavery antedates American Independence, which was nearly two hundred and fifty years ago. That remains the subsoil on which systemic racism still survives. Obama cites significant periods of this history, for instance, the Jim Crow South, or events like the Selma March, the Washington March, and the Ferguson Report. Each period and event are circumscribed and defined by its world, a network of people, places and artefacts. Such complex networks exist for all the issues or topics that Obama addresses in his speeches. The analysis of these issues in this study makes recourse to minimal worlds of context. That is, the analysis of presupposition in chapter 4 references only the bare historical and current facts or the minimal worlds that Obama mentions in his speeches.

The conversation between A and B in (6.1) and (6.2) shows that the non-natural meaning encapsulated in presuppositions and conversational implicatures is as much intrinsic to the conversations as is the natural semantic meaning of their utterances. This linkage also exists when a public speaker addresses an audience. First, a political speech occurs in a context that consists of “a forum, an exigence, and a speaker and an audience” (Dascal & Gross, 1999, p. 113). In a conversation, the speaker-hearer accesses semantic meanings and infer pragmatic meanings. This reciprocity does not exist in a public speech situation, because the audience understands the orator’s words and infers his

intended pragmatic meanings. The orator receives mostly non-linguistic responses from the audience, unlike the verbal back and forth in a conversation. Despite these differences both types of communication are goal driven and intentions play a crucial role in them (Dascal & Gross, 1999, p.108). The intentions of the speaker S shape the interpretations of the hearer H within the specific context within which the conversation takes place. Under Grice's theory of the Cooperative principle, the hearer in a one-to-one conversation infers speaker intentions when he calculates the implicature in the speaker's utterance. Similarly, the audience infers the orator's intended message in a one-to-many communication when they infer the implicatures in the orator's speech. For this reason, I claim that an orator addressing an audience is a *colloquy*, distinguishing it from a conversation.

Having established a principled distinction between a one-to-one conversation and the *colloquy* in a political speech, I proceed to demonstrate how the *colloquy* proceeds with a more explicit characterisation of the many worlds that Obama refers to in his speeches. These worlds were described in chapter 4 from the orator's perspective and that of his audience.

I begin with the excerpt from the DNC 2004 speech in which he talks about his family, which I reproduce below for convenience.

> "My parents shared not only an improbable love, they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined -- They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential.
>
> They're both passed away now. And yet, I **know** (emphasis added) that on this night they look down on me with great pride." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

The worlds in this excerpt, the world of his family is represented as follows.

(6.5) W_{family}: {Obama's father, Obama's mother, America, Barack Obama}.

In the 2008 Victory Speech, Obama mentions his family once again.

> "I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of

our family and the love of my life, our nation's next First Lady, Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us to the White House. And while she's no longer with us, I **know** (emphasis added) my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and **know** (emphasis added) that my debt to them is beyond measure." (Obama, 2008, November 04)

(6.6) W_{family}: {I, Michelle Obama, Sasha, Malia, puppy, White House, grandmother}

Combining the elements in these worlds and after removing identical ones, I get,

(6.7) W_{family}: {I/Barack, Michelle, Sasha, Malia, puppy, White House, grandmother, father, mother, nation/land (America), schools}

In the DNC speech Obama makes the propositions reproduced below from chapter 4.

(6.8) > > his parents shared an improbable love
>> they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation
>> his name is an African name
>> in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success

Each of these propositions perform a dual function and constitute segments of persuasiveness. In Aristotelean terms they would appeal to his audience through his character, his credibility as an honourable family man. At the same time the background details in this appeal would have helped his audience to infer his intended messages. They support inferences such as the following ones:

(6.9) + > It was an unlikely relationship.
+> Obama's family is a typical American family in believing in the opportunities for personal advancement.
+> His name can be a barrier to success, but not in a diverse America.
+> Obama's parents had high hopes for their child's future.
+> Rich people send their children to the best schools.
+> Obama's parents believed that success in America was possible without wealth.

+> Obama feels a sense of connection with and pride in his deceased parents.

This rhetorical and pragmatic convergence at the moment of delivery is the defining characteristic of the colloquy between a public speaker and his audience, just as it is in the imagined conversation between a speaker and hearer in (6.1) and (6.2). I go on to confirm this dynamic from an excerpt on another topic from Obama's speeches.

> "Go in -- Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach our kids to learn; they *know* (emphasis added) that parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They *know* (emphasis added) those things." (Obama, 2004, July 27)

The elements of this inner-city world are as follows

(6.10) $W_{\text{inner-city neighbourhood}}$: {neighbourhood, folks, government, kids, parents, children, television sets, black youth, book}

This world is characterized by entities that are lexical variables. They would obtain a value from the knowledge and experience of the individuals that make up the audience at the venue of a speech, or a virtual audience, through television, news organisations and social media. For a New Yorker, the Bronx would be the inner city, whereas to a person familiar with Chicago, it would be South Side, a place where Obama started his grassroots political movement. Other entities such as

{folks, kids, parents, children, television sets, black youth, book} would get significations in different ways through personal experience. In the given excerpt Obama touches upon the following backgrounded information about inner city neighbourhoods:

(6.11) >> governments give education to kids

>> parents may not be teaching their children

>> parents may not be raising their children's expectations

>> parents may not be turning off television sets

>> black youth who study are acting white

Obama presents an argument to convince black parents to get more involved in

their children's education. The audience would infer the following implicatures

(6.12) +> parents in inner city neighbourhoods must play a bigger role in their children's education

+> raising children's expectations boost their achievements

+> parents in inner city neighbourhoods need to discipline their children

+> watching television too much affects children's academic performance

+> people slandering black youth affects their motivation.

Thus, this example also accentuates the fact that rhetorical and pragmatic elements converge at the moment of delivery.

I can now return to the issue of the Cooperative principle and its maxims. I have already observed in chapter 5 that providing information is secondary to the primary objective of persuading an audience to a change of mind or initiate an action. It stands to reason that the maxim of Quality that enjoins a speaker to be truthful does not apply to deliberative speeches. A lie can initiate action as much as truth can. Aristotle's contention in *Rhetoric* is far more heterogeneous than the stand I advanced in chapter 5. In Book 1 of *Rhetoric,* he lists five topics appropriate for deliberative speeches: "finances, war and peace, national defense, imports and exports and the framing of laws" (Aristotle, 1359b; 1.4.7). Aristotle details the manner in which an orator can develop these topics. Regarding the general nature of the content of deliberative speeches on these topics, Aristotle says:

(6.13) 1. First, then, one must grasp what kinds of good and evil the deliberative speaker advises about, since [he will be concerned] not with all, but [only] with those that can both *possibly come to pass* or *not* (emphasis added). 2. As to whatever necessarily exists or *will exist* or is *impossible to be* or *to have come about*, on these matters there will be no deliberation. (Aristotle,1359b; 1.4.1, 2).

The words in italics express modality as shown below.

(6.14) "*All ('…come to pass')* –reality

"*possibly come to pass"*—possibility

"*will exist"*—imminence

"*impossible to be"*—impossibility

"*to have come about"*--necessity

These modalities fall into a scale of teleological modality (von Fintel, 2006, p. 2) appropriate for a persuasive speech that fit Aristotle's specification of its content and what does not. This scale may be called Aristotelian scale of teleological modality, represented as in

(6.15) < real, imminent, necessary, possible >

This scale is an example of a positive Hornian scale, which is defined as

(6.16) A set of linguistic alternatives $\langle x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n \rangle$ such that $S(x_1)$ unilaterally entails $S(x_2)$, where S is an arbitrary simplex sentence-frame, and $x_1 > x_2$ and where $x_1, x_2 \ldots, x_n$ are

a. equally lexicalized items, of the same word class, from the same register; and

b. 'about' the same semantic relation or from the same semantic field. (Huang 2014, 45, (2.33))

The expression $x_1 > x_2$ indicates that x_1 is semantically stronger than x_2. The items in the scale are adjectives and the same register of the category of the modality, and they have the same semantic relation with respect to beingness, thereby fulfilling the two conditions of a positive Hornian scale.

Applying the Aristotelian scale to the sentence frame "Equality is _____," on the topic of civil rights that appear in several of Obama's speeches, gives rise to simplex sentences as in

(6.17) Equality is /real/imminent/necessary/possible/impossible.

Each of these atomic sentences would be real in possible worlds, as evidenced by any artefact that attests the modal term in them. For instance, equality would be real in a world in which there is no systemic racism or discrimination, and people get equal opportunities. To take another instance related to equality, consider income gap. It is a concept that is easily quantifiable whether it is real, imminent, necessary or possible.

(6.18) Income gap is /real/imminent/necessary/possible.

These five simplex sentences can be evaluated for its truth value.

A clear contrast is now apparent between Grice's maxim of Quality about truthfulness and Aristotle's assertion that a persuasive speech deals with that which is possible. This difference strongly justifies revising Grice's maxims to suit the purpose of persuasive speeches, which is to speak about what is possible. It is striking that Aristotle excludes semantically stronger positions, in

which the orator focusses on what is possible as opposed to that which is real, or imminent or necessary. The strongest of these positions according to Aristotelian scale is one that is real or true in the real world, identical to Grice's maxims of Quality, which enjoins the speaker to make a "contribution, one that is true." Being faithful to truth, to conditions and states that exist in the US and around the world is, by and large, a characteristic of Obama's speeches; for example, the Ferguson Report is a US Department of Justice document; so too, the polarisation in the US Congress, the "patchwork heritage" of the US, the Civil War and segregation are instances of historical facts. So, also are the experiential stories of Ashley and the old black man, the "slander" against young African-Americans pursuing an education that they are acting white and of the relative safety of American homes are also true. But these references are presented within his pronouncements of policy or opinions.

Obama either gives his opinions on topical issue or talks about future policies which, in both cases, are possibilities, not matters of fact. For this reason, the maxim of Quality in so far as it applies to political speeches can be revised to

(6.19) Maxim of Quality for persuasive speeches

Say what is possible.

The analysis in Chapter 5 reveals that the maxim of Quantity, requiring a speaker to be "as informative as is required," is a tenuous requirement, because what is informatively sufficient in a political speech is difficult to ascertain. The political speaker makes the decision about how factual she would like to be. In principle, she can choose to be not truthful at all, while expecting her audience to unquestioningly take her falsehood as factual and as reflecting reality. Such a scenario will cause the calculability procedure that Grice laid down to breakdown. For instance, if a political leader decides to contest an election that she has lost, her assertion *that p,* "I won the election," is likely to elicit the implicature *that q* from her supporters to the effect that "our leader has been cheated," a violation of the maxim of Quantity. On the other hand, people on the other side of the political divide would implicate *that q* as "their leader is lying" or "the leader lost fair and square." The issue at hand is whether an assertion *that p* can implicate *that q* and *that ~q*. This contradiction justifies the conclusion that the maxim of Quantity, as Grice phrased it, lacks substantive

psychological reality, and consequently it need not be viewed as a cognitive maxim steering the communication between an orator and her audience. For this reason, the maxim of Quantity is vacuous in persuasive speeches.

Maxims of Relevance and Manner are injunctions which, when applied to political speeches, can and does create powerful oratory, and, as it has happened in the past, has the potential to change the course of history. The *Time* magazine reproduces, originally published at *History News Network*, a list of the 11 speeches from the past two hundred years that changed the world. They include Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address, Winston Churchill's "We shall fight on the beaches," Jawaharlal Nehru's "A tryst with destiny," Martin Luther King's "I have a dream," and Nelson Mandela's "I am prepared to die" (History News Network, 2014).

The maxim of Relevance enjoins speaker-hearer to be relevant in their exchanges. As noted earlier, Aristotle lists five issues that are appropriate for a deliberative speech, beyond which he specifies no other requirements of relevance. The Gricean "be relevant" when applied to persuasive speech is contingent on two factors, the speaker and the situation. Obama's 2008 inauguration as President required him to lay out before the nation and the world some of the policies that will guide his Presidency. The More Perfect Union speech addresses the vexed issue of racism and inequality in the US, as does the Selma March speech. His remarks on the acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize weave an approach to international affairs that is partly historical and partly contemporaneous. The several speeches he had to make at memorial events laid on him the difficult task of consoling a grieving community and nation after mass gun violence.

The second factor of the relevance of a speaker's utterance deals with the decisions an orator makes as she creates her speech. She chooses the details she considers relevant to the situation at which she has to deliver her speech. If the audience were to be a jury, views about the relevance of utterances and the details in them would most likely lead to a majority verdict in favour of the speaker. I will assume that this would be the case with the audience's reception of Obama's speeches with regard to their relevance at the micro level.

Grice's fourth maxim of Manner to be clear or "perspicuous" would be one that a speaker would have to adhere to without fail. Using pompous

language that most people would be unable to understand, not communicating ideas clearly, or delivering a long and disorganised speech would have serious negative impact on an audience. For these reasons an orator would be brief, use simple and clear language, and present her ideas in an organised way. These aspects are fully evident in Obama's speeches. No more evidence is required than the frequent applause that was heard when he delivered his speeches.

This brief discussion justifies two major conclusions relating to Grice's theory. First, the Cooperative Principle and its maxims hold for persuasive speeches with modifications in the maxims of Quality and Quantity.

(6.20) The Cooperative Principle

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 26)

Maxim of Quality

> Say what is possible.

Maxim of relation

> Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner

> Be perspicuous.
>
> 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
> 2. Avoid ambiguity.
> 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
> 4. Be orderly.

Second, the implicatures inferred from utterances in a persuasive speech are **oratorical implicatures**.

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